



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600055819Y



—

.

.

.

.



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

THE PURGATORY OF PETER THE CRUEL.

BY
James Greenwood illustrated by Ernest Griset.



THE PURGATORY
OF
PETER THE CRUEL.

BY
JAMES GREENWOOD.

WITH THIRTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS, DRAWN ON WOOD, BY
ERNEST GRISET.



LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.
NEW YORK: 416, BROOME STREET.
1868.

(The right of translation and reproduction is reserved.)

250. e. 35.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JAS. WADE,
TAVISTOCK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.



	PAGE.
1. ILLUSTRATED TITLE	I
2. HEADING TO LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	5
3. OUT OF A "LARK" PETER MURDERS A LINNET—HIS CONDIGN PUNISHMENT	9
4. PETER PERFORMS HIS LAST HUMAN ACT OF CRUELTY	12
5. THE FATE OF THE BEETLE TORTURER	18
6. THE CRIPPLED COCKROACH RETURNS TO THE BOSOM OF HIS FAMILY	24
7. WANTON ASSAULT AND ROBBERY BY FIERCE JACOB HUNDREDLEGS	28
8. PETER THE BEETLE AND HIS ENEMY THE INDIAN DRUMMER	31
9. THE SPECTACLE THAT PETER BEHELD ON ESCAPING FROM THE HOLD OF THE MANGOWALLAH	37
10. APPALLING TERMINATION OF THE SWEET DREAMS OF PETER THE BLUEBOTTLE	40
11. PAINFUL SUSPENSE OF PETER THE BLUEBOTTLE	46
12. THE SHADOW OF THE TERRIBLE HAND	52
13. PETER'S ALARM AT THE INHUMAN PROPOSAL OF HIS CAPTOR	55
14. APPALLING APPROACH OF THE MONSTER WITH THE SPIKY JAWS	58
15. THE INDIAN FROG IS AMAZED AT SIGHT OF A FLY OF THE HOOK-BACK SPECIES	63

	PAGE.
16. TO AVOID HIS SPECKLED ENEMY, PETER AVAILS HIMSELF OF THE SHELTER OF A SHELL	67
17. PETER THE SNAIL BEGUILLES THE INNOCENT SLUG TO AN UNTIMELY END	70
18. PETER THE SNAIL GETS ACQUAINTED WITH A JOLLY YOUNG BLACKBIRD	73
19. THE OFFICER OF THE GUARDS CHALLENGES PETER THE ANT	78
20. ANT(1)-SLAVERY	80
21. THE UN-WELCOME LITTLE STRANGER	83
22. THE PRISONER AT THE PORTAL OF THE HALL OF JUSTICE	88
23. THE TRIAL—THE VERDICT—THE SENTENCE	93
24. PETER FINDS EMPLOYMENT AS A GREEN COW KEEPER	98
25. THE CAPTAIN OF THE SLAVE DAIRYMEN LAYING DOWN THE LAW	102
26. PETER AND THE SENTRY RECOVERING THE GREEN COW FROM ITS SEMI-STRANGULATION	107
27. RECKLESS ONSLAUGHT OF THE RUFFIAN SENTINEL	117
28. PETER THE ANT INITIATES HIS MILITARY COMRADES INTO THE MYSTERIES OF HORNPIPE DANCING	125
29. APPALLING ROUT AND SLAUGHTER OF THE WHITY-BROWNS	131
30. RETRIBUTIVE ENDING OF PETER'S ANT SHAPE	138
31. TAILPIECE TO CHAPTER IV.	139
32. PETER THE NEWT OBTAINS A HORRIBLE INKLING OF HIS FUTURE	144
33. THE TRUANT NEWT DISCOVERED AND CAPTURED	148
34. THE CRUEL BOY'S STRIKING EXPERIENCE OF THE PROVERB THAT TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION	157
35. PETER'S LAST PURGATORIAL REMINISCENCE	161
36. PETER EMERGING FROM THE LAST OF HIS PURGATORIAL DISGUISES	164

THE PURGATORY OF PETER THE CRUEL.

THE PURGATORY OF PETER THE CRUEL.



INTRODUCTORY.

To ALL appearance it was the most absolute of unavoidable accidents. The unfortunate young fellow, able seaman on board the India-bound merchantman, Mangowallah, while engaged at some trifling job at the foremast-head, lost his hold, and catching vainly at the rigging as he fell, and crying out only once, came on his head with a crash to the deck, and there lay, with such a wound in his forehead as sufficiently accounted for his deathly stillness.

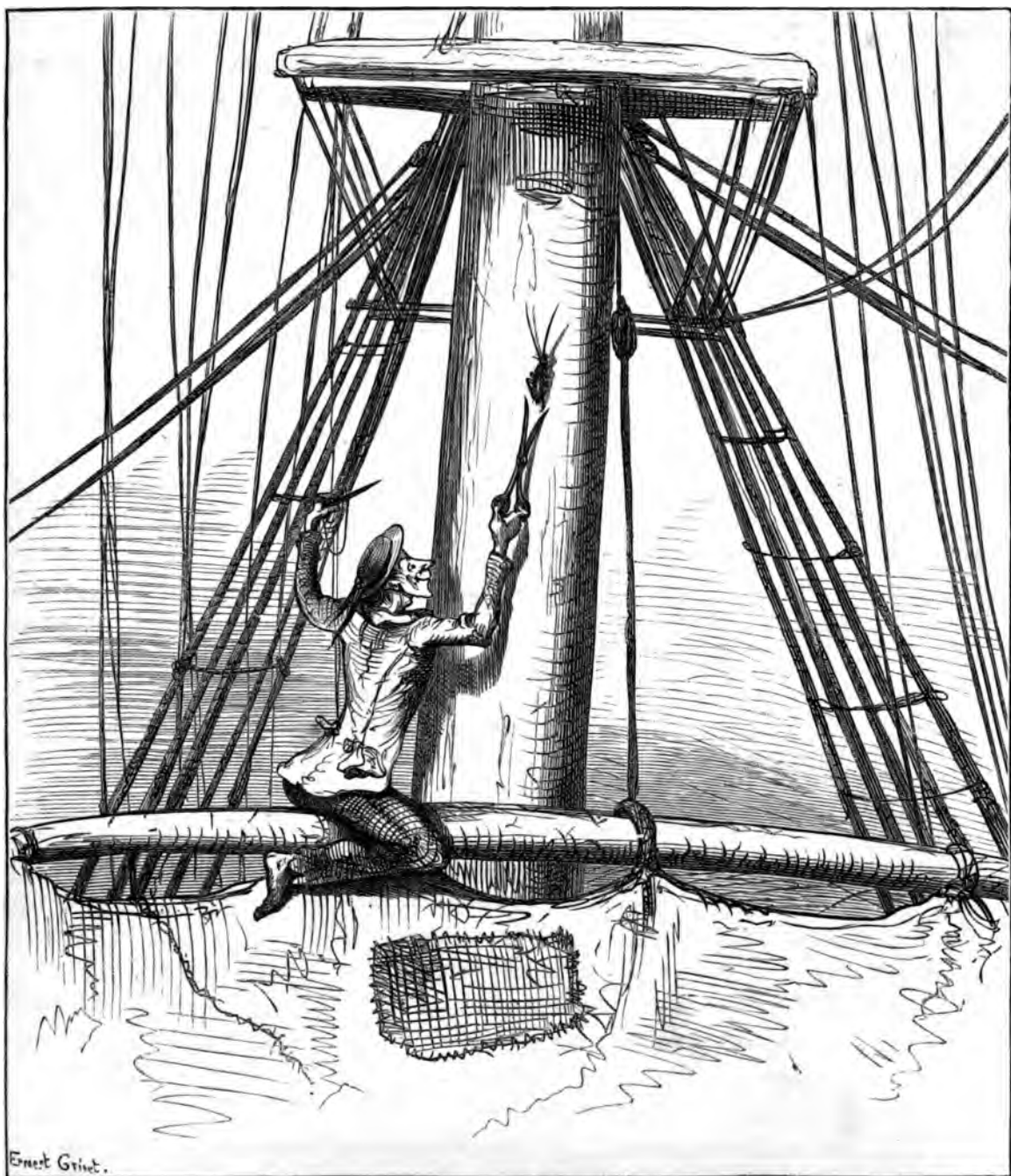
It was an accident that might happen to the most careful person, everybody was of opinion, including the cabin-passengers who had witnessed the occurrence and the captain himself, who undertook to write to Peter's friends by the next mail, and acquaint them

with the calamity. Had the Mangowallah that same evening been far out at sea, the body of Peter Walkingshaw would have been neatly sewn in the hammock he lately occupied, and cast into the sea with an iron weight at its heels, that it might race the sharks in its descent to the ocean's bed, there to sleep the long sleep that knows but one awakening; but, as it happened, they were already in sight of land, and not more than a day's sail from their destination, so it was resolved to carry the young man's body ashore, that the coroner might hold inquest on it.

There was good reason for adopting this course, independent of that which sprang out of the respect in which Peter was held by all on board, and a desire to extend the same to his poor body. As a dead body it was peculiar. Hours after it had lain on the bunk, with a sheet over it, it still remained limp; and when a very light feather was held before its lips, it was stirred—very faintly, it is true, still it *was* stirred—though when an ear was laid on its bosom, not the slightest pulsation of the heart could be detected; when its hand was raised from its side, it fell down again with a dead rap against the bunk; and with impunity its eyelids might be raised, and its eyes touched with the finger. The Mangowallah did not carry a doctor, and there were one or two amongst the crew that had witnessed similar cases, and they declared that the symptoms were such as invariably accompanied sudden death; and, as before stated, had the ship been far at sea instead of nigh to land, Peter's body would inevitably have been cast overboard.

Let their surmise as to whether the young man were alive or dead be as it may, however—and the question may well rest for the present—one thing is certain, they were altogether in error, though of course quite unaware of it, when they imagined that the accident that had befallen Peter Walkingshaw was unavoidable, and such as might have happened to the most careful person; the fact being that he had brought the calamity on his own head, and that it was no more than a righteous judgment on him.

It came about in this way. It was at a job of sail-mending that Peter was employed, and he had with him his sail-needle and his shears. Just as he was about fastening off and finishing the patch he was engaged on, he looked up towards another rent a few feet above his head, and which was next on the list for mending, and there he spied an unlucky cockroach that had wandered from the depths of the ship (being in the rum and molasses trade, the hold of the Mangowallah swarmed with countless thousands of such creatures), and blundered its way up into the rigging. The mortal enemy of insects, large and small, Peter had a special and deeply-rooted aversion for cockroaches.



PETER PERFORMS HIS LAST HUMAN ACT OF CRUELTY.

"If you will only wait half a minute, my fine fellow," he exclaimed, addressing this one, "I shall be coming up your way, and shall have something to whisper to you that will save you a longer walk!"

Still the innocent and unsuspecting cockroach kept on its way towards the mast-head.

"Your legs will never save your head, my beauty," cried Peter, "although you have six of them. Show us what you can do on five."

And so saying, he put up his shears and nipped off the wretched creature's hind left leg close by the knee.

Maimed and cruelly crippled as it was, however, the poor cockroach still struggled upward, when the cruel Peter further embarrassed it by once more putting up his shears, this time amputating the whole of its remaining hind-leg and a great slice of its horny wing-sheath.

"That, I should think, will stop your gallop, my friend," said Peter, with a cruel grimace at the insect's writhing. But he was mistaken. Gallop it certainly did not; but, with its four remaining legs, aided by the stump of the fifth, it toiled slowly upwards—as though conscious in that direction, if in any, there was the only chance of escape. But Peter was not the fellow to be beaten by a cockroach. The obstinacy of the creature exasperated him; and so, hurriedly reaching over his head with his sail-needle in his hand, he made a stab with it to pin his victim to the mast. That is how he met his accident. He overreached himself and swung forward, and while endeavouring to secure better hold for his left hand, lost it completely and fell down, his head striking the deck in the manner described.

"And so, because this reckless young fellow, more out of mischief than cruelty, it may be safely wagered, does damage to a disgusting cockroach," the indignant reader may exclaim—"because, with that disregard of the finer elements of humanity which is the characteristic of sailors, this Peter Walkingshaw maims a blundering cockroach, you regard it as a just punishment that he should fall down from a height and kill himself!"

To this I reply, "Not so. The individual who, spurred by sudden ill-temper, does harm to—nay, who goes so far even as to slay—a cockroach or any other helpless and harmless creature, large or small, although highly blamable, may atone for the indiscretion at a much smaller cost than the forfeiture of his own life. But Peter Walkingshaw was not such an individual; neither was he spurred to the cruel act that carried so fatal a sting of punishment with it by a sudden fit of any sort, but in pursuance of a malicious and monstrous

propensity, in which he had indulged from the moment almost when he first discovered the use of his hands. Towards his fellow-creatures he was fair-dealing enough, and would have been the first to resent what, from that point of view, appeared as tyranny or cowardice. For all that, however, he was as arrant a barbarian as ever trod an African desert—as cool-handed a murderer as ever shed blood. Not the blood of men, who might have turned against him and inflicted injury for injury, but the blood of the meanest and most helpless of God's creatures, against whom he could hold no grudge, and whose violent death could not possibly bring him relief—except, perhaps, that for the moment it pacified his perpetual yearning to smash and torment and destroy every creeping or flying thing that fell in his way.”

He was a terrible practical joker against every creature of humble creation. No spider was ever more cruel to flies than was Peter Walkingshaw, or “Cruel Peter,” as at a very early stage of his youth he was universally called. Even while he was as yet so small as to be compelled to mount on a chair to catch them, as they buzzed and bobbed their heads against the window, he would make prisoners of them, and effectually provide against their escape by pulling out their wings; then (for he was withal an ingenious lad) he would make a waggon out of a nutshell, and harness his wingless team thereto, pricking them with a fine cambric-needle if they did not travel fast enough. He could inform any one, with most perfect accuracy, as to the time a bluebottle could survive immersion in boiling water or in cold, or laid on the flat of its back on a hot oven-plate. To anybody with a heart hard enough and the patience to listen, he would recount thrilling stories of the battles of bluebottles when threaded two and two on a stocking-needle. It was his favourite pastime on a Wednesday afternoon, when he got a holiday, to procure a vast number of flies and play “Waterloo” and “Trafalgar” with them, of course doing all the fighting himself, and all the maiming and crippling, finishing up with a tremendous charge against the enemy, bayoneting it with the fine blade of his penknife and blowing it to smithereens with a ha’porth of gunpowder in a little cannon he had. Sometimes, when he was in extra good-humour, he would review the shattered remnant of the victorious army, and reward the members of it, according to their legless or wingless condition, with crumbs of sugar; but, more often, he would hold a court-martial on them and try them for cowardice, and invariably bring them in guilty, and blow them away from the mouth of his gun.

Fair words or harsh were equally inefficacious towards eradicating this black spot from Peter's character. At the age of eleven he solicited his papa to buy him some white mice;

and, in hopes that this was a sign of favourable alteration in his cruel child's disposition, the indulgent parent procured him three of the little pet animals and a cage, and a pint of oats to feed them on. But at the end of a week, finding the measure of oats not at all diminished, he took a peep into the mouse-cage, and discovered two of the tiny things starved and dead, and the third almost too feeble to crawl; and when Peter was taxed with the cruel neglect, he confessed that he had kept them without food purposely, just for the fun of seeing how long they could live on air. He drowned his mother's favourite cat by tying about her neck the whole of her new litter of kittens. For the tiny and industrious ant, even, he had neither pity nor respect; and it was one of his favourite pastimes to find a colony of the painstaking underground labourers, and suffocate every member of it with the fumes of ignited tobacco. Once he set fire to a bee-hive. Twice he was whipped for scandalous cruelty towards frogs. Three separate times he fractured his bones while engaged in nest-plundering; but that did not cure him of the practice, nor check his abominable method of dealing with the fledglings—taking the cocks and wringing the necks of the little hens, for their mother to find when she came home. Birds were his abomination. Once he climbed up to a martin's nest, and so softly as not to disturb the old mother bird within—and as soon as he put his fingers in at the nest mouth, she made a peck at them; on which Peter withdrew his fingers, and thrust his pocket-handkerchief in at the hole instead—and no more was seen of the poor martin, till the nest was blown down one winter's day, and her skeleton came tumbling down with it.

His father implored him to mend his ways; and, finding that advice and threatening were of no avail, tried whipping; and at the discovery of every fresh atrocity laid on to him without mercy. But he did not abate in his barbarity the least jot. His schoolmaster was informed of the difficulty, and volunteered to cure him of his brutality in a week; but he remained attached to the school only five days, and then was expelled for a shocking act of cruelty perpetrated against a linnet. Detected in the act of "spinning" a cockchafer, he was detained after school hours and set to chopping wood; but, after some time, hearing but faint and few sounds of chopping, the master looked in at the shed door, and discovered Peter with his jacket and cap on, sulking over his task in a very lazy manner. "You should strip to your work, Sir," said the schoolmaster; "take off your jacket and cap, and go at it like a man;" and at the same time he hastened the operation of stripping by laying his cane on Peter's shoulders. Hanging just outside the wood-shed was a linnet in a cage; and soon after the master had gone back to his desk, hearing the bird utter strange

sounds which were very unlike singing, he went to see, and judge of his horror and amazement when he saw the cruel boy with the poor linnet in his hand, plucking out its wing feathers, several of which lay strewn on the ground! "There, you lazy little wretch," the master heard him say; "why should I work without my jacket, while you won't sing even in yours? Now give us a song, Mr. Linnet, while I get on with this confounded wood-chopping." The thrashing he so justly received for this pretty prank should have taught him an enduring lesson of how easy it is for the strong to inflict pain on the weak; but, so far from this being the case, while he was locked in the schoolmaster's parlour, pending the fetching of his father, and with his back still smarting, he was discovered in the act of toasting a gold fish he had the instant previously speared out of a vase with a table-fork.

The worst of it was, his barbarity increased with his strength. Let it not be supposed that the most atrocious of his acts of cruelty have been here quoted. I should be afraid that the gentle reader would turn faint from this book if I were to relate a few stories of Peter Walkingshaw's wickedness to little birds, beasts, and fishes, such as out of my private knowledge of his character it is in my power to relate. Indeed, in going as far as I have, I may have trespassed on the sensitiveness of some of my readers; but, if so, may I be allowed to plead in extenuation that had I omitted to point out how enormously wicked he was all through his life, it would have been hard to understand that he really deserved some of the terrible punishments he was condemned to endure, and to the narration of which I am pledged?

However, we will say no more of cruel Peter's antecedents any further than that he grew so abominably bold in his peculiar iniquity, that it was resolved that he should be sent to sea, in the hope that, although his disposition to cruelty might not be cured, his opportunities for indulging it would of necessity be fewer than if he remained on shore, and so he might be made a better young man, even against his will.

That he made the most of his opportunities, however, has been sufficiently shown by an exposure of his wicked conduct towards the cockroach in the rigging of the Mangowallah. Alas for him! When he came to that he had no farther to go. He had got to the end of the lane that has no turning, and settling time had come.





THE FATE OF THE BEETLE TORTURER.

CHAPTER I.

THE height from which Peter fell was about twenty-five feet ; and, at the instant when his head came in contact with the floor of the ship's deck, his sensations of vitality underwent a very astonishing change.

In the natural order of things, the strange translation must have been effected momentarily ; but to Peter it seemed an operation tedious as it was terrible. Soon as the two substances, his skull and the floor-boards, met, the effect was pretty much, and on a small scale, that which follows the rasping of a lucifer-match against a rough surface, or the application of a spark to a heap of gunpowder. There was a bang, and then a sudden bursting forth of fire, in the form of millions of brilliant stars, so thickly clustering as to shut out all else beside ; and obliterating, in less time than it takes to wink an eye, the topsyturvy glance that Peter caught of the ship, and the ship's crew, in his headlong descent. Immediately on the blinding apparition of the blazing stars ensued a darkness black as ink, and so icy cold that life shrank and withered before it, and Peter was lost.

When he returned to life again, so altered was he that his most intimate friend—even his father or his mother—would not have recognised him. Indeed, he was anything but assured himself on the matter, and no great wonder. To contemplate one's own dead body must be bewildering under any circumstances, and that was the spectacle that Peter, in his new form, was doomed to contemplate. There, extended on the deck, lay the stark form of his late self, just as it had fallen, and surrounded by the crew, and the passengers, and the captain. He—the translated Peter, that is—could see the great wound in the forehead of the pale body, and a passenger chum, Tony Warren, with tears in his honest eyes, endeavouring to pour rum down the body's throat, while in kindest tones he begged of it to look up, or at least make some sign that he had not quite kicked the bucket. He saw the captain himself kneel down by the side of the body, with one hand on its wrist, and the other in at the bosom of his guernsey. He saw him shake his head hopelessly.

"How is it, Sir?" asked the second mate. "Don't say that the life is knocked out of him, captain!"

"It's all over with the poor fellow, Joshua," replied the captain. "I thought it must be so. A fall such as that must crack any skull, except a nigger's."

Hearing this, the crew, as Peter saw, turned away, applying the cuffs of their jackets to their eyes, and the captain himself, drawing out his silk handkerchief, hastily clapped it to his nose with a doleful trumpeting.

It was odd that Peter himself should have been as deeply affected as anybody at the melancholy scene; and he, too, essayed to turn away his head, but found it impossible to do so without moving his entire body. This discovery shocked and amazed him beyond description. What did it all mean? Where was he? What was he? How did it happen that he was dead and alive at the same time? How was the life that had discarded its old familiar lodging at present embodied?

In a very small compass, of that Peter was assured; for, timidly casting his eyes to the right and to the left, he discovered that he was stowed in a chink of a coil of cable, that contained him conveniently, with ample room to turn about if he was so minded. But he had no mind for that or anything else at present. He was conscious of being alive, in spite of the captain's announcement to the contrary, and of having eyes to see and ears to hear; but beyond that he was completely in ignorance, nor did he crave for enlightenment, lest the vague and mysterious dread that was creeping over him should be realised in its fullest horror. He did not feel hurt or in pain, and neither too hot nor too cold; he was comfortable enough in those respects, though not without a sensation of having on a suit of clothes buttoned well up to the throat, and a trifle too small for him; and there he stood, stock still, except for the trembling of his legs—of which in his new shape he appeared to possess an unaccountably large number—awaiting in dread for the something that should presently happen to relieve him of his awful suspense.

He had not very long to wait—not more than two minutes, perhaps—when, startling as it was unexpected, the key to the mystery tumbled down from the clouds, as it were, and alighted full in his view, and not six inches from him. At first sight, however, Peter did not recognise the key; all he saw was the confounded cockroach, seeking to pin which had led to his dreadful accident. The poor thing, with its legs off, and its stump all jagged and raw, and its wing-sheath all shattered and bleeding, lay stunned, as it were, for some little time; but presently struggled up on to its four legs, and gazed vacantly about it. Actuated by his old barbarity, Peter took a step towards his victim, intending to make short work of it this time, when, to his great amazement, the crippled cockroach opened its mouth and addressed him.

"Ah! little beetle!" it said, in its shrill piping voice, "I'm so glad to have met with you. See how cruelly I've been used, little beetle, by one of those giants with the terrible feet, that trample about the ship. I'm afraid that I shall die of my wounds, but should so like to see my little ones once more. Will you let me rest against you, as we make our way down below? You'll hurry there at once, if you will take a friend's advice; not one of us is safe for a moment if he ventures up here in the daytime."

"One of us! one of *us*, did you say?" exclaimed Peter, aghast.

"Ay, one of us. You are one of us, are you not, little stupid? Don't be alarmed; although a cockroach, I am not too proud to acknowledge a humble blackbeetle as one of my species. Why, what is the matter with you? You stare and start as though I had been deprived of the proper use of my speech, as well as of my poor hind-quarters."

But Peter heeded not one word of the maimed cockroach's rejoinder; nor was it necessary that he should, in order fully to comprehend the terrible reality of his new condition. He was convinced of it out of his own mouth, for simultaneously with his utterance of the words—"One of *us*, did you say?" although it was expressed in little above a whisper, he was startled as though a forty-eight pounder had been fired within a foot of his ear. His voice was miraculously changed. In his man's shape his voice had been full, and excellent for singing deep-toned maritime songs; now it was nothing but a weak twitter—a sort of combination of the chirp of the smallest of birds and the squeak of the youngest and tiniest of mice. But that was not the most appalling part of the discovery. In the tones of the cockroach's voice, making allowance for its being somewhat more robust and deep-chested, he could not fail to recognise the exact counterpart of that with which he himself was endowed.

That was why he started, and stared, and trembled violently in all his six knees—he could no longer doubt that his mysterious new life was in blackbeetle shape, and that his doom was either to run out of his present hiding-place on to the deck, and seek death under the heels of his late shipmates, who were hurrying to and fro (still bent on endeavouring to bring back a little life into the body), or else to take the cockroach's advice, and seek refuge in the gloomy haunts of those whose form he was condemned to wear—to dwell with, herd with, eat with the creatures he held in such horror and detestation, and against whom, while in human life, he had waged such deadly and unceasing war. It was a choice of six on the one side and half-a-dozen on the other. The faculty of thought, however, still remained to the translated Peter, and he was speedily brought to reflect that

it was at least half a point in favour of living. Even as a blackbeetle he might be worse off than he was; he need only look at the cruelly-crippled insect before him to be convinced of *that*. And then, again, if a second worldly existence had been vouchsafed him, why not a third? And who could tell what the third might be, especially if he aggravated matters by putting an end to his beetle life in a violent and murderous manner?

There is one consolation, argued Peter, if I am doomed to become a blackbeetle because of the many of the sort I have hurt and smashed, and more especially because I served this wretched cockroach out, it doesn't seem that I am to be pecked at and worried more than if I were an innocent beetle—that is quite clear; since this creature does not know me again, it is hardly likely that those below will be any wiser.

He had remained silent so long, that the cockroach came to the conclusion that he was surly, and disinclined to assist him; and, with a reproachful look, was turning away to crawl home as best he could. It was this look that roused Peter the beetle out of his black study. "Since I am in for it, I may as well show myself civil," said he to himself; and, swallowing his repugnance, he hurried after the poor creature, who was feebly dragging its body towards a hatchway that led down into the hold.

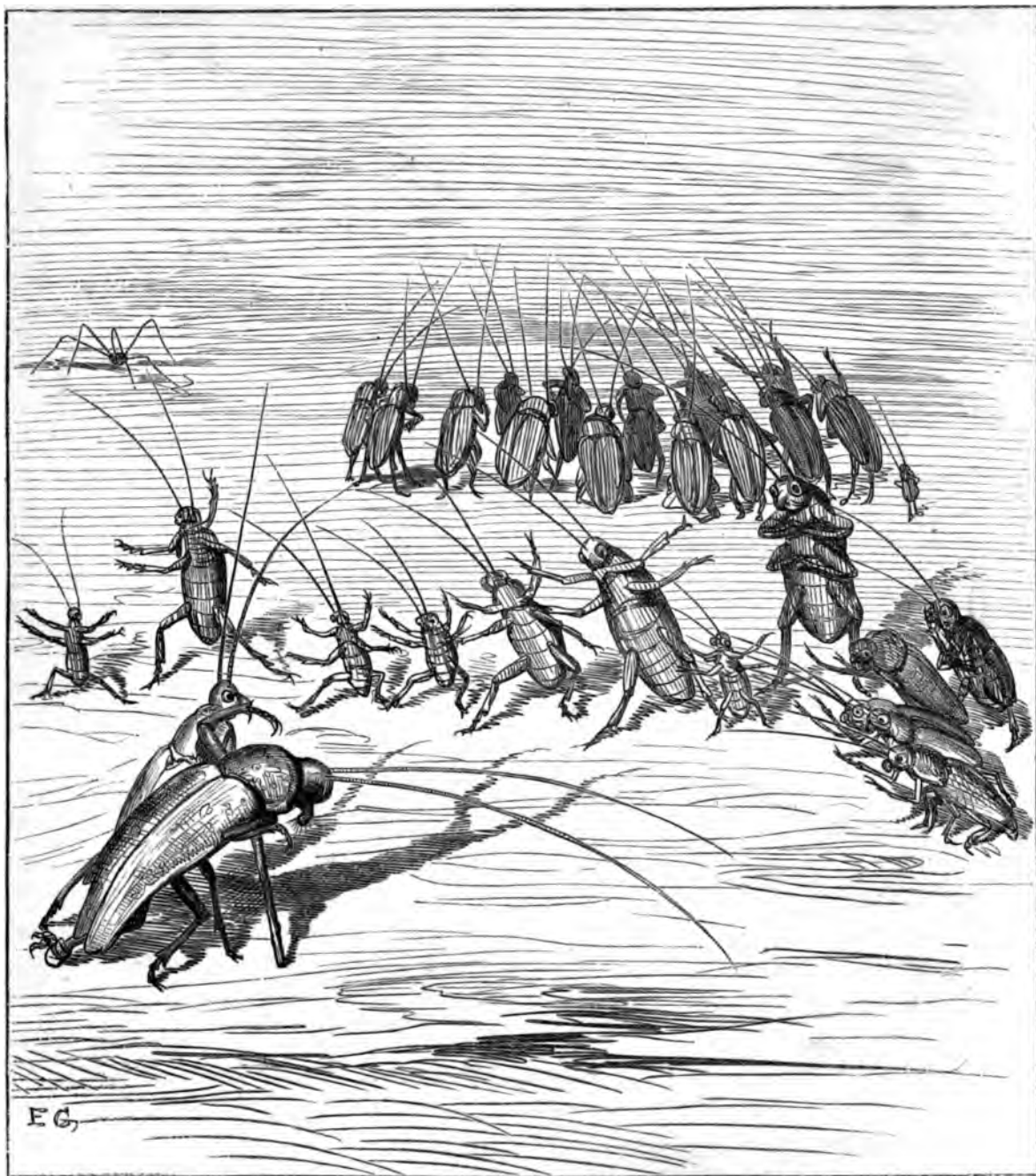
"If you can get along better for resting on me, you are welcome," said he, running up to the exhausted creature's side.

"Ah! I thought it strange that so pleasant-looking a little beetle should show himself so unkind. 'He must be ill,' I thought. No beetle or cockroach, able to do so, ever yet refused to help a neighbour in trouble or pain. I never knew of such a case in all my life. I'd sooner be hurt as I am than be sound and have a heart so hard as not to have pity for a fellow in distress."

Peter knew not what to say in reply. The hurt cockroach spoke in tones of such simple sincerity that it was impossible to doubt him; and, hearing such an assurance from its tiny mouth, for the first time in his new life, and for many a year in his old, Peter felt ashamed of himself; and he placed his shoulder at the disposal of his victim with much more readiness than a moment before he would have thought possible to him.

"I *did* feel a little out of sorts when you first addressed me," said he apologetically.

"Ah! I daresay it was the sight of my cruel wounds that affected you," answered the cockroach, gladly availing himself of his friend's assistance, as they made their way through a chink of the hatchway grating. And from this point it was the blind leading the lame,



THE CRIPPLED COCKROACH RETURNS TO THE BOSOM OF HIS FAMILY.

in a manner of speaking; for as soon as the inner corner of the hatchway was turned, the darkness was perfect; and Peter, although with beetle eyes in his head, for awhile found it difficult to see a foot before his nose. But the cockroach was an old inhabitant of the Mangowallah, and knew every short cut and by-way from stem to stern; and, though their progress was slow, in a very short time the depths of the hold were gained, and after traversing the grimy floor, saturated with the lees of sugar and rum, for a considerable distance, the cockroach suddenly dipped into a knot-hole in the boards and was immediately at home.

Still lending his shoulder to his wounded companion, and accompanying him down the hole, Peter at once found himself surrounded by a spectacle that caused him an indescribable tingling to the extremity of his tail. By this time, his eyes had grown more familiar with gloom and darkness, and he could see about him with tolerable distinctness. There must have been thousands of blackbeetles—tens, hundreds of thousands of them. They covered the under ridges of the hold flooring as with an unbroken tremulous sheet, crawling over each other, and issuing busily in and out of the crevices and fissures in the worm-eaten wood. There were big cockroaches—or “drummers,” as Peter, while in man’s shape, had known them—ay, and hated them too, because of the incessant noise of “tack, tack, tack!” they made during the small hours of the night—and there were hosts of blackbeetles, big and little, the females distinguished from the males by being without the substantial wing-cases—and looking, on that account, and from a beetleish point of view, quite genteel and slender. There were countless rows of egg-cases, glued to the timbers by the careful mother beetles, who pottered about them with anxious faces, gently feeling them with their antennæ, and attentively listening if they could detect any sounds of life within.

Nor was this all that was to be seen down there under the hold planking. Within an arm’s length was an inky pool of bilge-water, dead and stagnant, except when a troop of rats, in sport or bent on business, splashed and scuffled through it. Besides these, there were other rats in their nests, gnawed in the ship’s beams and sides—grey, elderly rats, and little creatures no longer than a finger—squealing, and rolling about, and biting and fighting in play, or comfortably sprawled across their mother’s furry belly, sucking a breakfast from her. There were mice, too, and monstrous spiders, and strange things with many joints in their wriggling length, and legs so numerous that eyes no sharper than a beetle’s might never count them. Other creatures there were, of whose existence Peter had previously been in

ignorance ; for they only breed in such places, and are never seen out of them. All about was foulness and uncleanness ; or rather, such would have been the verdict of a being of such high and superior sentiments as belong to human creatures ; but as Peter the black-beetle viewed them, he discovered nothing to make him shudder or turn away his head. And this was his great horror. It seemed so terrible for a man to be so debased from his natural self.

But he had little opportunity at present for this sort of reflection. Within a minute of entering in at the hole, the maimed cockroach's friends and relations came in great numbers to view his injuries and condole with him. Foremost of these was one with naked wings ; and to see her behaviour towards her mate was enough to melt a harder heart than Peter's : how she walked round and round him, uttering doleful cries, while her delicate wings were spread and quivering ; and how tenderly she examined his wounded parts, touching and caressing them with her antennæ. How was it done ? Who was the cruel creature that could have done so monstrous a thing ? And, to the best of his ability, the suffering cockroach described the manner of his injury, and the individual who had inflicted it. It quite made Peter quake to observe the vengeful gestures of the biggest of the cockroaches—their manner of rolling their goggle eyes, and the nervous twitching of their massy forelegs betrayed by many of the hoary old "drummers" as they listened. "But he paid dearly for it," continued the crippled insect ; "he was endeavouring to hurt me more still—to kill me, I think, and he slipped and fell down dead." Scarcely more racking was it to the feelings of Peter the beetle to hear the tiny shouts of exultation that followed this announcement.

Especially as promptly following came the inquiry—

"And who is the young fellow that so kindly helped you home ?"

"I don't know in what part of the ship he lodges," replied the old cockroach. "But from where he was, he must have had a better view of the great coward when he fell out of the rigging than I had. You saw him fall, did you not, little one ?"

"No ! I did not come to where you found me till after he had fallen," replied Peter the beetle in a nervous voice.

"But you saw him afterwards. How did he look ?" asked a dozen eager voices.

"Bad," said Peter, abruptly, and wishing that they would change the subject for a more pleasant one.

"How bad?—smashed, with all his legs and his head broken?"

"With all his head broken; that I saw," said Peter, shuddering.

"Twit! twit! twit!" chirped the beetles merrily, as they rubbed their feelers together. "With his head all broken! How lucky you were to see it! Didn't you feel glad, little beetle? Didn't you feel ready to sing when you saw the big, rascally man who tried to maim and kill our poor father—who never did nor never could do him any harm—lying with his head all broken?"

"It made me feel so sick, that I can scarcely tell you how I felt," Peter answered, scarce knowing what to say.

"What made you feel sick?" demanded a large cockroach, twirling his antennæ with his right fore-paw in an unpleasant manner.

"To see the great scissors with which he had cut off this poor thing's legs," replied Peter the beetle, deeming it excusable in his desperate strait to depart from the strict letter of facts.

"Ah! say no more about the horrid things," interrupted the female cockroach, who by this time was attending to her husband's wounds—plastering them tenderly with the same sort of cement she uses in sticking her egg-cases against the floor so that they may not fall off and get shifted. "Where do you live?"

"I can't tell you," said Peter boldly. "I had lost my way, and was seeking it when I witnessed the accident. It is somewhere right at the farther end of the ship where I live when I'm at home."

"He looks to me like one of those precious stuck-up cabin-beetles," remarked the fierce cockroach who had previously twirled his antennæ at Peter, and evidently had, from some unaccountable reason, taken a dislike to him; "and if so he'd better be off. We don't want cabin-beetles, that can't eat anything but white sugar and cheese, in our company."

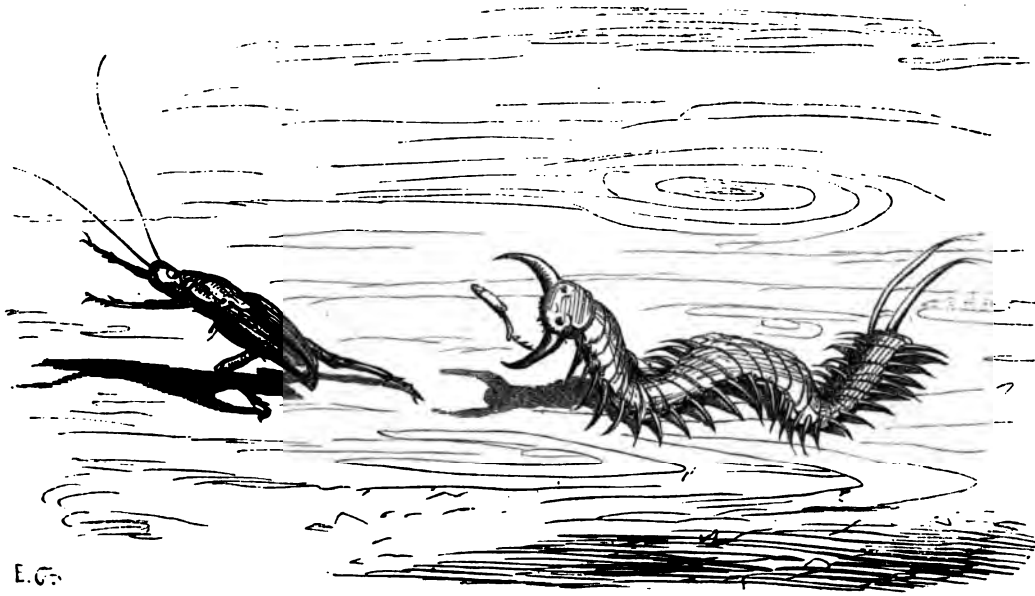
"You may take my word I never was a cabin-beetle in my life," replied Peter. "At the same time, I have no wish to stay here if I am in the way."

"But you shall stay here, and you are not in the way," said the female that was salving her husband's hurts. "Don't mind him. It's his way. He can't bear that our family should be under obligations to strangers. There, rub wings and be friends. We'll have no quarrelling here."

And, with ill grace, the cockroach did as his mother bade—crossing over to where

Peter was, and rasping his wing-case against that of the latter, producing a sound like the passing of a finger-nail down hanging silk, and a sensation not unpleasant. 9

After this, Peter was left to go where he liked and as he pleased; everybody, now that the excitement attendant on the coming home of the invalid had somewhat subsided, returning to his or her previous occupation, and being much too busy to notice him. There seemed plenty to do, though a great deal of it was of a nature that Peter was quite



WANTON ASSAULT AND ROBBERY BY FIERCE JACOB HUNDREDLEGS.

at a loss to understand. Many of the larger males were constantly running to and fro, hunting for food, which they brought to the females, who were too busy at hatching to provide for themselves; while others stood about the skirt of the colony, evidently keeping guard against the raids of some enemy—amongst which might be counted the many-jointed things with the countless legs; for, happening to be lurking in an unfrequented nook, Peter saw one of these creatures stealing away like a tiger of the jungle, with a tiny kicking and squalling beetle in its mouth. Creditable indeed must have been the change of Peter's sentiments towards the beetle tribe, even in this little time; for, sallying out, he nimbly got in the marauder's path, and that so suddenly that it dropped the baby insect in 5)

its astonishment, which ran back, as fast as its legs could carry it, to its mother. But immediately after the discovery that, except for Peter, the coast was clear, the many-legged one arched its back, and, making a spring quick as lightning, had the beetle in its grasp, wrapping round it as a boa-constrictor wraps about a deer.

So sudden was the attack, that, for a moment, Peter the beetle was powerless to offer any resistance, but allowed the monster to do as he pleased—its pleasure, or rather its spite, consisting in pressing its victim's body with all its might, at the same time gripping by the thigh one of its legs in its jaws, which seemed to be full of spiky teeth. It was the pain caused by this last infliction that roused Peter to a sense of the peril of his position; and, making a prodigious exertion, he clawed with his five disengaged feet at his persecutor till he was compelled to unwind himself. His hold on the leg, however, he persisted in retaining; nor could Peter well hinder it, since the pull was all behind; and when he tried to turn, the rapacious thing turned too, and tugged and rolled over, at the same time sinking its teeth deeper and deeper into Peter's thigh, till he screamed so loudly that, had any beetle or cockroach been within half-a-dozen yards, he must have been heard. At last he could stand it no longer, and, exerting all his fast-failing strength, made a scramble forward, anchoring his claws well in the floor, hoping to drag his tortured limb out of the creature's jaws. But, alas! his desperation only hastened the catastrophe. Instead of releasing the leg from the monster, he released it from his own body; and, with but five limbs and a little bit, he stumbled forward, while the victorious beast, with the joint in his mouth, travelled away as hard as his countless feet could carry him.

For a little time, Peter was in such pain as to be altogether unable to move. Never in all his previous life had he suffered the amputation of so much as a joint of a little toe or finger. As before stated, three times he had broken his bones by falling out of trees while engaged at bird's-nest robbery; but the agony he then experienced was the merest kitten scratch to that he now endured. It was only fear lest the monster should return, and, imagining him helpless, make a second attack on him, that spurred him to make a move towards the general encampment, which he reached only after much toil and suffering, although the distance was scarcely longer than the width of an ordinary room. There arrived, in the very first knot of busy beetles that stopped to inquire why he was limping and groaning, was the wife of the cockroach on whom he had inflicted so much injury. However, she knew nothing of that. She only saw in the beetle before her a good insect who had been kind to her kin, and she was only too glad to assist him to the best of her

ability. So she dressed his wound with as much skill and tenderness as she had dressed her husband's; and, by way of making matters as comfortable as possible for both parties, led him to the crevice where her spouse was lying in hospital, and left them to cheer one another.

But it was the old cockroach that had to do all the cheering, although his case was sadly worse than Peter's. The remorse of the latter by far exceeded his pain; and when he gazed on his victim's cruel wounds, and noted the patience and cheerfulness with which he bore them, he felt that it would be the best thing that could happen if the many-legged monster had crushed him up entirely. He would have thought so indeed had he known how small a distance he had advanced into his life of punishments, and what a great cup, of the bitterness of which he at present had so barely sipped, was in store for him.

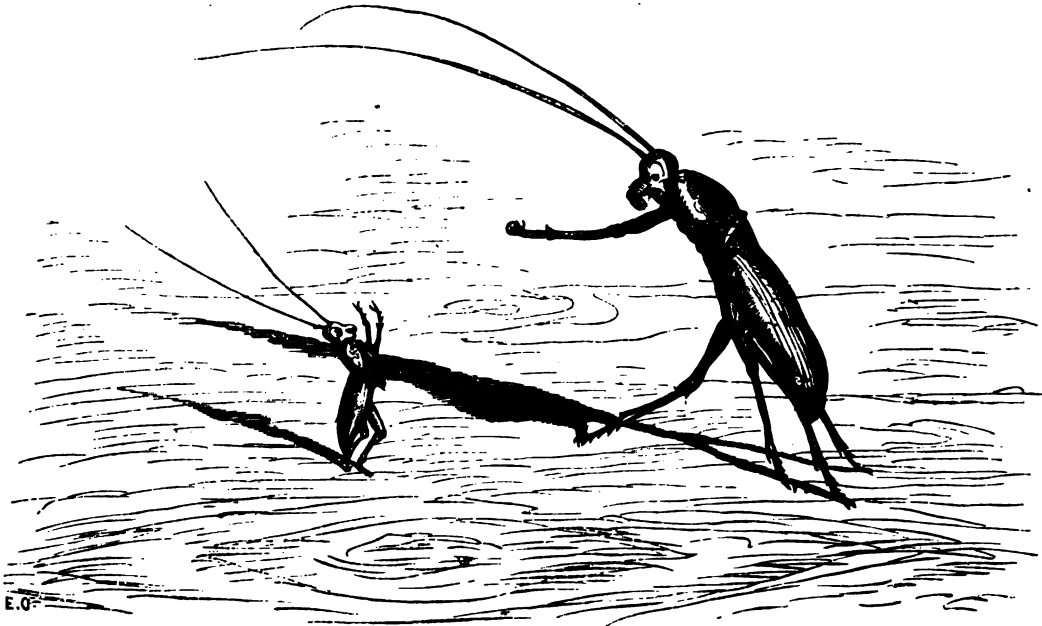
It was the kindness of the cockroach and his wife that led Peter to declare himself strong enough to leave hospital long before he was really able to do so. He would rather, or he thought so, that his victim had abused than condoled with him, and that his wife had bitten and ill-treated him, than brought him all manner of dainties to eat. But since their compassion for him appeared to increase rather than diminish, when the Mangowallah had arrived at her destination, and had been three days in port, he one morning slipped out while his fellow-invalid was dozing, resolved to make his way ashore, where at least he would be out of sight of the constant reminder of his guilt.

This was an unwise determination, for more reasons than one, but for one in particular, and that was that he had a deadly enemy among the beetles, into whose society he was cast. The cockroach before mentioned as exhibiting unfriendliness towards him, accusing him of being a stuck-up cabin-beetle, had never forgiven him—though, for that matter, had he been asked what was the origin of his animosity, he would have found it as difficult to answer as many a time would have old Peter under similar circumstances. He—the cockroach, that is—hated Peter with all his might. When he heard about his leg being bitten, he was delighted beyond expression, and secretly hoped that it might prove his death. Being a relative of the maimed cockroach's wife, it was easy for him to obtain information that the bitten leg was progressing favourably, and that probably in a few days the strange beetle would be on his legs again, or at least on as many of them as were left to him. Then he grew furious, and, although he kept his own counsel, resolved what he would do the first time he met him after his recovery.

As before mentioned, he was a cockroach of large size, and a most powerful "drummer,"

as the sturdiness of his legs attested. He was an East Indian on the mother's side, which may account for the heat and malignity of his hatred. He kept watch for Peter the black-beetle; saw him creep out of the chink away from his wounded friend; and hid in the shadow of a hole, while his victim scuttled past at the top of his speed, making for the road that led to the hatchway.

Swift as thought his vindictive enemy followed, and kept noiselessly close at his heels,



PETER THE BEETLE AND HIS ENEMY THE INDIAN DRUMMER.

until a secluded part of the hold was reached; and then, with an exultant whistle, he sprang on him, and grasping him about the abdomen, exerted his giant strength, and flung Peter on to his back; and then stood over him clashing his jaws, and flourishing his stout fore-legs in a fearfully savage manner.

"Now I've got you, my cabin dandy," exclaimed the ruffian, "and I mean to make short work of you!"

It was some seconds ere Peter could recover his speech, the attack was so sudden; besides, his rough handling, and being flung so uncereemoniously over on to his head, had set

his stump bleeding again, causing him excessive pain. Soon, however, as he could speak, "What does this mean?" he inquired of the cockroach; "what harm did ever I do you?"

"None, that I remember! But that proves nothing," answered the cockroach, grasping Peter round the throat; "because I've got such a bad memory. How you've made me your enemy I neither know nor care; I *am* your enemy, and that is enough."

"But I never met you before in all my life," urged Peter, faintly.

"Perhaps not; but if you ever met and did an injury to any member of my family it is exactly the same thing. Can you declare that you never injured a 'drummer' in all your life?"

This was a poser. Drummers, indeed! Peter had injured hundreds of them; annihilated them with hammers and heavy weights, caught them in traps and plunged them wholesale into boiling water. On one occasion, when no hot water was at hand, he had shovelled upwards of forty of them overboard to drown in the briny ocean. As his assailant asked him the question, he looked him hard in the face, so that it was impossible to tell him a deliberate falsehood.

"I do declare that, in all my beetle life, I never so much as hurt a hair of a cockroach's head, 'drummer' or other," replied Peter, evasively.

"It's false; I'm sure that it is false," answered the ferocious cockroach, making surer grip on Peter; "there is the blood of our people on your head; I can smell it plainly; I smelt it the moment you made your appearance amongst us. You must die."

But when it came to this, humble blackbeetle as he was, Peter resolved not to give his enemy the victory without a struggle. The cockroach was on him, with its front legs encircling his throat, and the knees of his second legs on his stomach, and it evidently was the villain's intention to strangle him. So clasped, Peter had no other weapon of defence but his antennæ, or feelers, that projected before his nose. He made the most of these, however, and, all unexpected, brought them together and thrust the tops of them into his enemy's eyes, which, wide open, were glaring down on him. The desired effect was produced. Although not much hurt, the sudden smart the "drummer" experienced compelled him to shrink back, relieving Peter's throat, and, instantly availing himself of his chance, the latter mustered his remaining strength, and wriggled himself out of the cockroach's grasp, and on to his legs again.

But the hot-blooded East Indian was not so easily balked of his prey. With his eyes smarting so that he was compelled to hold up one foot to rub them—which made it an

even match as regards number of legs between himself and Peter—he pursued the retreating blackbeetle, who was at considerable disadvantage enough, being short-breathed after his late struggle, and speedily overtook him. This time, however, Peter faced about and stood his ground. But he was no match for the stalwart drummer. After a feint or two, he made a sudden dart forward with his fore-paw, and caught the unlucky beetle by both feelers, which he twisted together in so painful a manner that Peter squeaked for mercy.

“Come along,” cried the drummer, “we’ll find a quiet spot up this way, and then you shall see the mercy I’ll show you.”

But he was spared the cruel death the cockroach designed him. In his headlong hurry to drag his victim to slaughter, the drummer did not see clearly which road he was taking; and presently, while crossing a fragment of splintered wood that was torn away from the under part of the flooring, it partly yielded, causing him to be glad to leave his hold on Peter’s feelers to save himself. But it is doubtful if the unhappy beetle was bettered by this unexpected change in the aspect of affairs. Being so suddenly let go, he lost his foothold altogether, and fell like a stone, splash into the pool of black bilge water below.

As an able seaman he had been an excellent swimmer, but as a blackbeetle he was as ignorant of the art as blackbeetles invariably are. When he dropped, he went plump to the bottom of the foul pool, and rose again to its surface, gasping for air and fighting to keep afloat. It was a horrible predicament. With his head and shoulders above the water, he could make out in the distance the busy beetles trotting to and fro, and happily and contentedly attending to their private concerns; and then, still fighting very hard to keep his head up, he thought of the amount of grief it must have caused in their happy families each time he had slaughtered a batch of them, and how much that grief would have been aggravated could their relatives have known the cruel manner of their death. “It is bad enough,” gasped Peter, whose strength was fast failing, “to drown in cold water; what must it be to expire in water that is boiling hot!”

The terrible reflection was too much for him. It caused a shudder to pervade his exhausted frame, and he forgot to fight the water, and down he sank, a drowned blackbeetle.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN it is said that, overwhelmed by a sudden recollection of a barbarous act committed against blackbeetles in his previous life, Peter, losing his little remaining strength, sank to the bottom of the pool of inky bilge water, drowned and dead, it is intended merely to convey to the reader what were Peter's own ideas on the matter.

In reality, however, he did nothing of the kind. He had tasted of beetle life in accordance with the terms of his purgatorial doom, and the time had arrived for him to assume his next shape; and all the while he was floundering and gasping to keep his unhappy nose above water he was unconsciously assisting in his own transformation.

The result of his struggling and wriggling was, that he released his body of the heavy leather-like beetle wing-sheaths, while his body itself became smaller and more symmetrical. He kicked off his legs, others immediately sprouting in their stead; and when he became insensible, or lost his head, as the vulgar saying is, one more befitting his new figure took its place without the delay of a millionth part of a second. It was during that moment of insensibility that the invisible powers that had Peter's punishment in hand wrought his perfect change; and instead of, as he imagined, a strangulated beetle floundering to the water's depths, at that identical instant a fly of the bluebottle species, with drenched wings, and struggling for breath, laboured from the pool's surface, and thankfully enough availed itself of the first landing that in its flight presented, and which, as the fates ordained, was the identical splinter in crossing which, with his maimed captive, the vindictive drummer got into such difficulties as to be glad to abandon his sanguinary design, and give all his attention to his own safety.

So benumbed was the bluebottle, that it was some considerable time before he could realise the fact of his existence even. His eyes were as dim as though he wore a pair of ground-glass spectacles before them, and his sensations were altogether new. He felt so little, and, excepting in the head, so exceedingly light. Looking about him, in spite of his defective vision, he recognised the bloodthirsty drummer, still gazing, with an expression of countenance that betokened his chagrin at being balked of his prey, down into the bilge water; and, as he regarded him, came a recollection of his previous beetle shape, and how

that he had suffered the loss of a limb in his battle with the horrible many-legs. Carefully raising and setting down his feet, now he discovered to his joy and surprise that he was in enjoyment of the full and proper complement of six. Broader daylight dispelling his mind of muddle, he remembered likewise his contest with the sanguinary East Indian before him, and how nigh the latter had come to garotting him; and feeling so very little and light, he wondered how he had ever found the pluck to attack such a monster. Yet, somehow, he now felt no fear of it. He felt pity for it, because it was such a great lumbering creature, but he did not dread it in the least. The disgusted cockroach was talking to itself; and, out of curiosity, the bluebottle went a few steps towards it, to hear what it was grumbling about, but could no more make out its language than though it was speaking Chinese. This was strange; and, while collecting his thoughts, to bring them to investigation of the matter, the bluebottle spread his wings, and made that peculiar whizzing noise with them such as all flies are wont when their organs of flight are wet and they desire to fan them dry. This roused the cockroach, and caused it to turn about so suddenly, that the bluebottle was startled, and instinctively rose from the splinter.

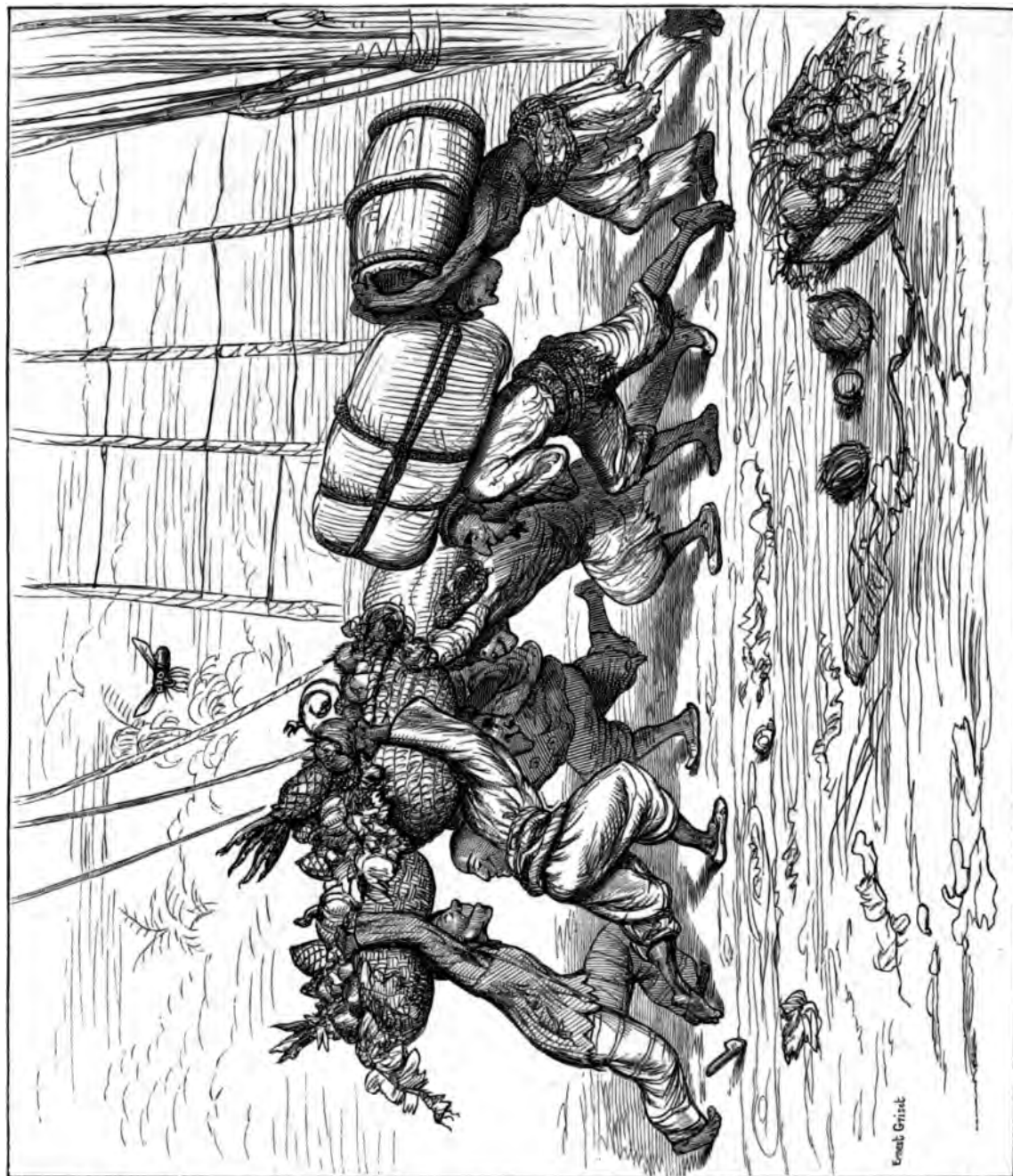
He was still under the flooring of the ship's hold, and there was but scant space between that and the ship's bottom, but enough to enable Peter to make the amazing discovery that, in his new shape, he possessed the power of flying. For a few moments he could scarcely credit his senses; but there could be no mistake. Having risen from the splinter by an effort as easy or easier than walking, he was enabled to float in the air, swimming, as it were, to and fro in any direction that pleased him. So charmed was the bluebottle with his discovery, that, for fully five minutes, he did nothing but fly about, hovering over the beetle nests and the rat nests, and the little ugly holes and chinks, in and out at which creatures of the many-leg breed writhed and wriggled. Suddenly it occurred to him, if it is so pleasant to fly about in this pent-up miserable place, what must it be up above in the bright warm sunshine!—which shows at once that he could not have been an ordinary bluebottle, else, in the dark space between the hold planking and the bilge water, what could he have known about sunshine, unless he had had a previous existence?

But why should there be a mystery about so simple a matter? The bluebottle was Peter, and Peter was the bluebottle. It was no secret to him. Flying about had invigorated his faculties as well as his body, and by this time he had a perfect recollection of all that had happened to him since he attempted to spear the cockroach in the rigging. "I see how it is," thought he, giving vent to a little buzzing laugh, which showed how

very far from purged his wicked heart was as yet, "I see how it is! I was turned into a beetle because of my cruelty to beetles—and a very horrible life a beetle's is, and shockingly painful it is to have a leg torn off. But that's all over now, and I am made into a fly. That is because of my cruelty to flies, I suppose. But whoever it is that is serving me out, has made a little mistake this time. Oh dear! oh dear! what a dreadful punishment it is to be a fly! Oh, how it does make one ache to skim about light as a bubble in the air!" And so, derisively sporting and making fun, he spied the chink in the floor he had crawled in at as a blackbeetle, and nimbly skipped out at it; and, a moment after, was out at the hatchway and on the deck, where the blazing sun showed the sails glaring white, and all was light, and life, and business, and the soft, sweet breeze blew deliciously.

After being so long immured in his gloomy dungeon as a blackbeetle—as an invalid blackbeetle with a broken leg—Peter the bluebottle was almost beside himself with joy. The Mangowallah was at anchor, and the coolies were busy trudging to and fro from the shore to the ship, bearing all manner of fruits and sweet spices—the lading of the ship on her homeward voyage; and, feeling hungry, Peter presently settled on a pineapple that, crushed and neglected, lay in a corner, and ate of the flesh and drank of its rich syrup until he was quite full and contented. But he was not in the least grateful. His foremost thought was what a fool whoever the power responsible for his translation must be to imagine that it was any punishment to be a fly. "It's better than being a sailor, even; it's better than being the captain of a ship!" sang Peter in his tiny voice; and then, leisurely rising in the air, he took wing for the shore, artfully winking one of his little eyes at his own cleverness, and thinking, "The best thing I can do is to get out of the reach of this precious power, that does as it likes with me, it seems. It will be cunning indeed if it discovers such a mite of a thing as a bluebottle in the snug place I will find to hide until the Mangowallah sails again."

So, selfish as ever, and without one thought about poor sailor Peter, whom he had last seen lying as dead, and with that terrible wound in his forehead—without so much as going to take a peep to see if he was still lying there, or had been buried—straight to the shore the bluebottle flew. Arrived there, in the streets, where the rich bazaars, with all their dazzling, spangled wares, glistened in the sun, in the gardens, where the great luscious fruit hung on the cool green trees, and where the ground twinkled with flowers like a heaven of rainbow-coloured stars, Peter was indeed happy. His behaviour, in fact, was



Frank Grink

THE SPECTACLE THAT PETER BEHELD ON ESCAPING FROM THE HOLD OF THE MANGOWALLAH.



that of an intoxicated bluebottle—as any sober fly would have thought had it witnessed his queer tumblings and gyrations, his high flights and his low flights, and his insane revelry in the honey-cups of the flowers. And the more of fly life he experienced, the more his heart yearned to it; until, quite outwearied with his joyful pranks, he settled on a bough of a fragrant gum-tree, declaring, as well as his spent breath would allow him, that of all lives in the world, none could possibly be so jolly as the life of a bluebottle.

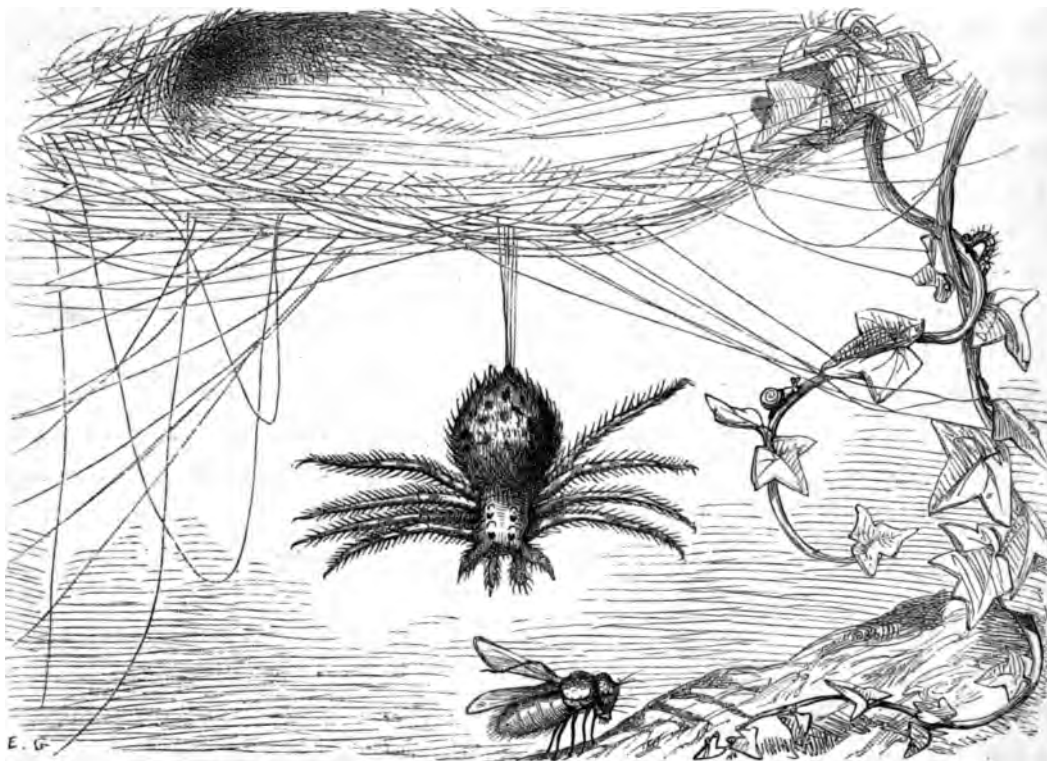
It was still early afternoon, and the heat of the sun was intense; moreover, the fragrance of the gum-tree was not of a pungent sort, but rather such as would induce soothing and sleepiness. Peter felt its influence, without the least inclination to resist it. “I’m all right and comfortable up here,” said he, gaping in weariness; “it doesn’t matter if I fall off, my wings will save me long before I reach the ground. It was a lucky thing that that stupid sailor didn’t have wings, or he would never have fallen and killed himself, out of the rigging of that tiresome old ship, and I shouldn’t have been a happy bluebottle!” And with this unfeeling pleasantry he closed his eyes, and leisurely gave himself over to sleep.

But scarcely had he lost consciousness, than, within a foot of him—emerging from a funnel-shaped den, in the centre of a woven net, made of cords so like sun-light in colour that it was not until you gazed intently at it that its shape could be made out—came a monster, more terrible to look on than the ugliest nightmare that ever bestrode the neck of a sleeping victim; a terrific creature, five times the size of Peter. It had eight legs, all covered with coarse long hanging hairs, and crooked claws instead of toes; it had a great fat body, all spotted like the body of a leopard; fierce, restless eyes, and a horrid mouth, the jaws of which twitched hungrily. For a moment it stood at the threshold of its den, eyeing the unsuspecting victim; and then it ran nimbly over its net to the lowest edge, and, by a rope of its own spinning, lowered itself headforemost and with extended limbs, and for a moment hovered over the sleeper; only for a moment, however, and then it fell, grasping its prey in its dreadful embrace, and gripping it with its jaws.

With a scream of affright Peter awoke, opening his eyes to find them almost touching the savage, staring optics of the dreadful spider. With the desperate strength of despair he kicked and struggled against his captor, who hugged him harder and bit him sharper the more he resisted; and, as its nippers were tipped with poison, the conflict was of short duration. In a little while the struggles of the bluebottle ceased, and he lay fainting and still; whereon the strong spider, taking him in four of his legs, climbed up his rope with

him, right into his net, and trotted over its fragile surface to his den, and at once sat down to make a meal of him.

But it was not to be. Already the spider had discovered that his game was of foreign flavour, and such as did not exactly suit his palate ; and it was only because he had not tasted food since the morning that he could bring himself to partake of the unsavoury meal.



APPALLING TERMINATION OF THE SWEET DREAMS OF PETER THE BLUEBOTTLE.

Just as he was about to begin, however, what should come, blindly butting against the trap, but a soft-bodied, gauze-winged butterfly of the garden—tender, succulent, large—just the thing for a hungry spider ; and, in a twinkling, the hairy-legged giant dropped Peter, and darted out on this fresh prey ; and in a moment, large as it was, he triumphantly brought it in, and, without ceremony, went at it tooth and nail.

It has been said that the spider dropped Peter the bluebottle ; but it was only on to the

floor of his den that he dropped him, and not down out of the tree and on to the ground. No such luck for the unhappy wretch. Old and experienced was that spider, and a steadfast observer of that most excellent of maxims, "Waste not, want not." A younger and more giddy creature would have thrown the bluebottle out of window when the more desirable butterfly came crying, "Come, eat me!" But it was not for nothing that the gum-tree spider had lived through four seasons of winter and rain. Many and many a time he had been so hard pushed for a dinner as to be glad to return to the husks and skeletons of his summer's slaughter, for the sake of the scant picking that remained on them; and, on the present occasion, it was not because his good fortune had sent him roast beef, as one may say, to-day, that he was justified in casting out meat of an inferior kind. It occupied the spider a long while to devour the butterfly; but, the meal at an end, he waddled to where Peter still lay insensible and huddled up, with his wings shrunk to his side—a very deplorable object indeed. The spider was perfectly aware that his victim was only stunned, and not dead, and any one unacquainted with the habits and manners of the creature would certainly have conjectured, from its manœuvring over the prostrate fly, that the spider was putting the finishing touch to his deadly work. He would have been mistaken. It would not be until to-morrow, perhaps not until next day, or even that following—if another lucky wind blew one or other of the butterfly's relatives into the web—that the bluebottle's carcass would be needed; and, in that hot climate, the only way of keeping your carcasses fresh is to keep them alive. This was the intent of the hairy-legged one. Like the dexterous spinner he was, in almost as little time as it takes to describe the operation, he had woven a web round the bluebottle, so that it was completely enveloped; and then, dragging it out of his house, he attached a strong cord to the net, and lowering Peter over one of the many cross-bars of his trap, there secured the end of the rope, and left him hanging. And this little job completed to his satisfaction, the spider collected the unconsumed scraps of butterfly, and carried them into his den that they might afford him toothsome amusement until he fell asleep.

Towards the evening the gentle breeze of the day increased, and swung Peter in his net to and fro, at first gently, but by degrees harder, until he was bumped against a bough. Then he gradually returned to his senses. The spider had not bitten him severely, nor poisoned him more than was necessary to render him insensible for the time being; so that when consciousness began to return to him its progress was rapid, and in a few minutes he had all his wits about him. But alas! they were unequal to the task of

enabling him to make out how he came in the terrible fix in which he discovered himself. So sudden had been the spider's attack on him, that he had but a vague idea of the circumstance, any further than for an instant two terrible eyes had gazed on him, and a terrible mouth had yawned on him, and that then he had lost himself. There could be no doubt, however, as to the character of the place in which he found himself. He was in the web of a spider !

Being quite unaware of his narrow escape from being devoured, as well as of his enemy's domestic economy, at first Peter thought that he had but just now got entangled in the trap ; and that, as soon as the voracious inhabitant of the shady den in its centre felt him there, he would be out on him ; and, labouring under this dread, he lay as still as possible, in a sweat of terror lest the trembling of his limbs should shake the net and rouse the savage asleep in his lair. But, finding that nothing of the sort happened, he ventured to look about him more curiously, and then discovered the singular nature of his imprisonment. It was evident that the spider had already been at him. For what purpose was he caged, and hung up ? When he thought of this, fright overcame his prudence, and he raised his voice, uttering such melancholy cries that the great spider, who was just dropping to sleep, was roused, and came angrily to his door, putting out his head to see what the row was about. That was enough for Peter. In an instant he recognised the glaring eyes and quivering cruelly-armed jaws that had frightened the life out of him so recently, and he was straight stricken dumb with terror, not daring, while the appalling eyes were set on him, to close his mouth, that was still expanded in the midst of a shriek, lest the slight noise he might make in the operation should further rouse the monster's ire.

The spider had something to say, as he looked towards Peter's uncomfortable cage ; and though the unlucky prisoner could not understand a word of spider language, that which was said conveyed a threat, he had not the least doubt ; and he felt immensely relieved to see the monster go back grumblingly into his cave again, where he was lost to sight. After this not one sound of complaint did Peter utter. His legs were cramped, and the tight-fitting net-jacket bound his wings with painful security to his sides ; but not a murmur did he allow to escape his lips.

Night was coming on, and the wind grew chilly, and swung about his cage in a very unpleasant manner. Not that he felt any inclination for sleep. Of the habits of spiders he was completely ignorant ; and the doubt that tormented him was, had he not somewhere heard that they were more active and ravenous by night than by day ? All night long he

kept weary vigil, never for an instant removing his gaze from the spot where he knew the den was, and a thousand times starting, with a cold shiver, when the breeze shook the trap more than usual, leading Peter to imagine that now the savage thing was coming, and that it was all over.

Never in all his life—not even in his beetle life—did he pass such a night of agony ; and by morning light his cage hung about him quite loosely, he had grown so thin. “I shouldn’t feel the infliction half so keenly,” sighed Peter to himself, “if I had never been permitted to taste the delights of a fly’s life—to know what it was to have wings and use them, to float in the air with power to move hither and thither with such a sweet sense of liberty. It was cruel to make me a fly and serve me in this way.”

It was just in the cold grey of morning when he thought this—when he felt so cold, and empty, and wretched, and with no surety of his life from one moment to another. It was as though his complaints had provoked the indignation of the invisible powers in whose hands Peter’s punishment was, and he was promptly answered. It was not a sounding voice that answered him, but a voice within him, bidding him reflect on what his treatment to flies had been while in the full enjoyment of the best of all lives, the life human. And Peter, though sorely against his will, did reflect, and it was like plunging into water of unknown depth with him. Every instance of his cruelty to flies stood forth to confront him, till there was such an overwhelming host, that had he been able he would have raised a fore-foot, and held it before his eyes to shut them out. But if his eyes had been covered with iron and soldered, it would have been all in vain, for the grisly spectacle was not without but within. In every conceivable way a cruel mortal might adopt towards torturing a fly there were examples to be seen, but more frequent than any was the spectacle of a boy—well indeed Peter knew him—hunting flies and catching them alive, and flinging them into spider traps, for the pleasure it gave him to see the venomous creature dart out and murder it and suck its blood. Sorrowful and ashamed did Peter the bluebottle, shivering in his prison, regard through his mind’s-eye the malicious little villain thrusting fly after fly into the treacherous net, dancing and clapping his hands in glee, when the monster, with the clawed legs, came stalking towards its prey, and more ashamed and confused still did he feel when he observed in the boy’s eyes an expression of just the same savage sort as that which lit up the eyes of his grim captor when he came to his door last evening to inquire what he, Peter, was making so much noise about. “No wonder that the flies were at such pains to get out of my way when I was a boy, if I had eyes like that!” thought

Peter, shudderingly. "I wish I had been drowned in the bilge-water pool, as a cockroach. It is dreadful enough when one looks with merciful eyes, to witness, even in imagination, the struggles and sufferings of a poor fly in the clutches of a spider; what must it be to feel, as I shall presently feel, these terrible legs wrapped round me—that horrid mouth—ugh!"

It was partly because of his inability to pursue a theme so harrowing that Peter uttered this abrupt exclamation, and partly from another reason. Just at the identical moment when his imaginings had reached this ugly pitch, a slight noise of whizzing and buzzing startled him, and, looking about, there he spied a poor little green-tailed fly struggling in the web-trap, with its wings spread and its feet tangled. It was all the work of an instant, but it was all over with the tiny victim, or it would be presently, when the spider roused. Prompted by the better nature his remorse had discovered, even at the risk of bringing his gaoler's vengeance on his own head, Peter called to the green-tailed fly, imploring it to use all its endeavours to free itself from the meshes of the snare. "Don't scramble in that manner," urged Peter; "give all your strength to extricating a leg at a time. That's it! Now unhook the top of your left wing where it is caught. That's brave. Ah! your leg is caught again. I wish the wind would blow me towards you, so that I might reach through my bars, and give you a hand. A-a-a-h-h!"

It was a tremendous shriek, considering his size, that Peter here uttered; a shriek of pain and horror; for just then, the mottled spider, who, like all spiders, even while he slept held the lines of his net like a bird-catcher, was disturbed; and, not being averse to an early breakfast, put its long legs over the web with ten times racehorse speed, and, before one could wink, the green-tailed fly was enveloped in his deadly embrace. Fifty times as a boy had Peter seen the same sight, and only shouted, "Peg into him! Bravo, spider!" but now the spectacle made him sick and faint, and the stifled cries of the poor little victim thrilled him through and through. Reckless of consequences, he reviled the spider, and called him bloodthirsty and monstrous, and otherwise abused him to such an extent that perhaps it was fortunate that the creature was ignorant of the fly tongue, and mistook the noise his bluebottle prisoner was making for the mere squealing and squalling of fright.

Anyhow, he took not the least notice, but continued and completed his cruel work, brutally licking his lips, as he tossed the empty carcass out of the net. Then he came over to where Peter was; observing which, that unfortunate bluebottle made himself as small as possible, and was ready to die with fright.



Emil G. Heub

PAINFUL SUSPENSE OF PETER THE BLUEBOTTLE.

But the spider only looked at him, and at the fastening of his cage, and, apparently satisfied, yawned and strolled back to his den again. Three separate times that morning was the shocking tragedy Peter had already witnessed repeated; still he was left unmolested, though lying constantly in dread was almost as bad as being attacked, and reduced him to so nervous a condition that, had the spider but laid a claw on him, his waning life would have fled before it. But it was not his doom that he should be spider's meat.

A humble-bee brought him deliverance. The afternoon was advancing, and the sun was high in the heavens, and Peter was roasting, as he hung in his airy prison, and the spider was dozing after dinner in the inner recesses of his lair, when a sudden humming broke on the still drowsy air, and presently the humble-bee hove in sight. Thinking of nothing else but his song, and how nice it was to fly about while the sun was shining, the great handsome fellow came blundering on, for all the world as though he had no eyes in his head, full tilt towards the trap. Peter's voice was considerably weakened by hunger and fright, but he made the best of it to warn the bee of his danger. It was of no use: with his cheery hum-humming on he came, and presently struck against the web, making it tremble to its foundation; and at the same instant, disturbed from its slumbers and in a red-hot rage, the spider came thundering out of his den; and, before almost that he knew the sort of customer he was tackling, was on the humble-bee, clutching his velvety body, and doing his best to hold him and prevent his escape.

But the big blustering bee had no such present intention. Stalwart lancer as he was, he went in no dread of spiders or their wiles; and finding, in the first place, that the glutinous web was trammelling his wing, and in the second, that the proprietor of the web, instead of apologising as soon as he discovered the mischief that had happened, flew at him, biting and scratching, his rage was excited, and he turned on the spider with a will.

As before stated, the spider was old and wily, and though not of a quarter the bee's strength, ten times his match at cunning, and the battle was terrific. It was the dagger against the bowl—the sting of the humble-bee against the poison of the spider. One moment this combatant had the advantage; the next the other; until both were wrapped about and hampered by the web, which was torn from its moorings, and rent and tattered woefully. Most sincerely did Peter wish that the humble-bee might prove victorious, but for several minutes the issue was doubtful. By this time the web was torn and hanging straight down like a wisp of rag, and Peter was in dread lest both disputants should presently tumble to the ground, and leave him suspended in the air, to starve to death.

Presently, however, the spider, discovering that he was getting the worst of it, made a backward run to gain the security of his den, and the bee, with a cry of exultation, made after it. It may be recollected that Peter's cage hung just below the den, and to reach it the big clumsy bee sought to avail himself of Peter's suspending rope to help to haul him up. The rope was unequal to the strain, and snapped, and down fell Peter, cage and all, on to the grass below.

It was long and thick grass, and for some time Peter lay perfectly still amongst it, scarcely knowing whether to be pleased or sorry at the accident. True, he had escaped from what appeared to be certain death at the jaws of the spider; but was it preferable to lie bound and helpless, and await a slow and lingering death? With all his remaining strength, he tried to break through his bonds; but they were tough enough to resist the feeble struggles of his embarrassed legs. He tried to bite the cords asunder; but, at the very first attempt, found them so deadly bitter that, even for his life's sake, he could not repeat the experiment. At last, outwearied by his tremendous exertions, following on his weary night of watchfulness, he fell asleep.

Soundly indeed must he have slept; for, though it was only afternoon when his detachment from the great trap happened, and at night there was a thunder-storm and heavy rain, he did not wake until the sun was up next morning. And deplorable indeed was his condition. Lying on the cold, wet ground all night, his limbs were stiff and ached; and his voice, when, in the extremity of his grief, he tried to raise it, was so hoarse that he scarcely recognised it. But good had come of his lodging on the wet grass, however. The damp had saturated and rotted the cords of the net that confined him; so that, weak and exhausted as he was, he found it quite easy to free himself from it.

This indeed was an event to be grateful for! Although he could not use his wings to fly (they felt as though glued to his sides), he managed to crawl; and, making his way up a tall weed stalk, gained the summit of it, and so was enabled to expose his drenched and shivering body to the comforting rays of the sun. In a few minutes he felt much better; so much so, indeed, that his chief pain was in his stomach, because hunger was pinching it so. This was a gratifying symptom. "If I could only contrive to fly a little distance, I've no doubt that I might very speedily find something to eat," mused Peter; and, after several desperate efforts, he contrived to raise himself from the weed top and make a low flight of a dozen yards or so; then, however, he did not alight, but fell down out of sheer weakness.

As good fortune ordained, he fell down at exactly the right spot. It was a garden path, and recently some one had walked there eating biscuit, a piece of which, as large as a shilling, lay just handy. It must have been overnight when the bit was dropped, for it was soaked with the rain that had fallen; which, again, was lucky. If a physician was prescribing for a famished and starving bluebottle, it is more than likely that the order would be, "Let him have some soaked biscuit; it is light and wholesome, very easy to swallow, and suitable to his impaired digestion."

Never in the whole course of both his previous lives, had Peter tasted anything so delicious. It at once quenched his thirst and satisfied his hunger; and, happening to be a biscuit with carraway seeds in it, there was a spiciness about the scrap that fell to Peter's share curiously warm and comforting. Its effects on him were wonderful. His attenuated figure plumped out, his wings recovered their strength and flexibility, and he felt himself quite a strong and hearty bluebottle again. But not, as the reader will regret to be informed, a thoroughly penitent and contrite bluebottle. With his strength returned his audacity, or a great portion of it. "Well, I trust I am a wiser fly for my experience," said he. "Certainly it is a very terrible thing to be a prisoner in a spider's trap; but, to be sure, it is only blundering, thick-headed flies that are liable to fall into such trouble. I was blundering and thick-headed when I went to sleep without first looking about me to make sure that danger was not at hand. I'll warrant I will not be such a fool again; and since I've been through the very worst that can happen to a bluebottle, why I don't care a biscuit-crumble for any one or anything. I'm going in for enjoyment now. I think it is my due after all I have suffered. But I mean to go carefully and keep my eyes open, never fear!"

And with that, light of heart as of head, and with flippant wings, Peter the bluebottle took flight, and throughout that day enjoyed himself to the full. It would occupy pages to tell of the places he visited, and of the many, many delicious dishes he feasted off. He paid a visit to the sacred chamber of the great mogul, who sat on his cushions of gold and satin, waited on by trembling slaves, and sipping his coffee out of a crystal cup. In the most daring manner he alighted on, and saluted the shoulders of, the most favourite of all the sultanas. He rode on an elephant. In fact, there is scarcely telling what he did not do during that day; and the result of it all was, that come night, he was more than ever convinced that a fly's life was the most easy and pleasant in the world, granting, of course, that you were a fly of shrewdness and sense, and carefully avoided spiders and

villainous boys who pursued you for their cruel sport. That night he lodged in the town, in the chamber of a house rigorously clean, and without so much as a cobweb to be found from garret to cellar.

He breakfasted, too, at that house in town; and here he did a thing that certainly did not say much for his shrewdness or caution. There was a honey-pot on the breakfast-table. The lid was on, it is true; but smearing the mouth of the vessel was enough of the enticing sweet to feast half-a-dozen bluebottles of moderate appetite. Peter's appetite for honey, however, on this occasion was immoderate, and he ate and ate till, although it was early morning, he felt cloyed and drowsy, and inclined for a nap rather than a start on just such a round of pleasure as he enjoyed yesterday. But he resolved to shake off this sluggishness, and, rousing himself, flew out at the window.

"I'll take a turn in the country," said he. "The fresh air will do me good."

So he did. It was a lovely morning, and after the recent rain the air was cool and refreshing, and the birds sang in the trees. Peter, however, avoided trees. Despite the bracing influence of the weather, he still felt dull and heavy, and once was inclined to sleep on the cool, broad leaves of a palm tree, and take just forty winks to drive away his drowsiness; but he withstood the temptation. "Forty winks I must have," said he, "but not in a tree, thank you. There is a spot over yonder that will better suit me; there can be no danger of spiders there!"

The spot in question was a blank brick wall that surrounded a pleasure-ground, and presented a clean level plain, with neither nook nor crevice in which an enemy might lurk. The sun shone on the wall, and everybody knows how cosy-looking is a brown brick wall on which the sun is shining. "I shall be all right here," yawned Peter, as he settled on the face of the wall. "I will just have a little nap, and wake up as fresh as a daisy."

By this time Peter's stomach-qualms had almost subsided, and, in luxurious laziness, he settled himself comfortably, blinking and winking on the warm ruddy bricks just under his nose, courting a nap, and on the best possible terms with himself.

"This is what I call jolly," said he to himself, as he yawned the deliberate yawn of a creature whose time is entirely at its own disposal. "What a fortunate thing it was that I should think of coming on this delightful country excursion! Nobody but a wide-awake bluebottle could have conceived the happy idea. I know exactly what a blundering common sort of fly would have done, had he felt drowsy and done up as I did this morning. He would have flown on to the window, and gone to sleep forthwith, and that with half-a-

dozen cruel little wretches of children in the room eager to catch him and tear him limb from limb, as the horrid spider served that silly butterfly the day before yesterday. Not that *I* ought to call the poor beggar hard names; he saved *my* bacon without doubt. Nothing is easier than to catch a fly that settles on a window-pane. I should know, for I've caught hundreds in that way. What a lark it used to be to hear them fizzing and whizzing and butting their thick heads against the glass! Serve 'em right. It would have served *me* right had I been so foolish as to stop on that window instead of looking out at it. I'm all right here. If a bluebottle has not sufficient sense to take care of himself, he has nobody to blame but himself if he comes to grief; that's *my* opinion on the subject."

And winking and blinking harder in his self-conceit, and thinking what an amazing, clever fellow he was, and how hard it would go with boys and spiders if all flies were equally shrewd to take care of themselves, Peter presently dozed to sleep.

He did not sleep very long, and then he awoke in a fright. He was dreaming of the pleasant time when he was a boy, and was out amongst the trees engaged in spinning a cockchafer. At last he laughed in his sleep so loud at the fun that he partially woke himself.

"Ha! ha! ha!"

But that wasn't *his* laugh.

"Ha! ha! ha! Now I'll have him, I'll lay a wager!"

With his dream still haunting him, and the loud noise stunning his ears, Peter was spell-bound, and could not move a limb. His eyes were wide open, however; and on the wall, fair in view, was a sight that thrilled him with horror. There were five great black crooked claws attached to a stout limb, and the claws were making at him slowly—surely. It brought no consolation to Peter's horrified mind, that what he saw on the wall was not substance, but shadow. Instinctively he knew that the shadow waited on the substance, and could not assume a threatening attitude without the leave and leading of its master. Closer and swifter the shadow approached; and then, with a terrific shock, Peter was swept off the face of the wall, and he found himself in pitchy darkness, with a suffocating pressure bearing against his body and all his limbs, hurting him so cruelly that he shrieked out his loudest.

"Have you got him?" he heard a voice exclaim.

It was an English voice, the like of which Peter had not heard since he flew off from

the Mangowallah. This at least was a relief, for his first impression was, that some gigantic spider had got him a second time.

"I've caught him, and a whacker he is! He'll do."

"Mind he don't get away. Pull one of his wings off, and then he won't be able to fly."

"That isn't a good plan. The more life he's got in him, the more he'll wriggle and



THE SHADOW OF THE TERRIBLE HAND.

kick, and invite 'em to come up and bite him. Don't fear; I've got him tight enough and we haven't got much farther to go before we shall want him."

And truly, whoever it was that had Peter the Bluebottle in his grasp, had him tight enough indeed—so tight that the wings of the poor insect were all crumpled and doubled out of shape, while his legs were crossed and squeezed in a most painful manner, and his head so violently pressed back against his body, that how his neck sustained the strain was

a miracle. Nor was this the worst of it; all the time he was suffering from such stifling, suffocating heat, that his breath came and went in brief and hurried gasps, and in a manner that vividly recalled to his memory his immersion in bilge-water during his blackbeetle existence.

Then what about the mysterious and alarming conversation he had been obliged to hear? To what torture did the boys who were his captors (he knew from their voices that they were boys) design him? His present pain was not the worst he was doomed to endure, it seemed. Something was to be done to him, causing him to wriggle and kick, as an invitation to somebody or something to come and bite him. Was he, after all, fated to breathe his last in a spider's web? Nobody but spiders bit flies. That they did he was well aware, both from painful personal experience and frequent observation when a boy. Scores of times he had thrown a fly into a web, and now he was to be served the same!

His conjectures, however, were incorrect. In his frightened and bemuddled condition, he had overlooked at least one other creature besides the spider that is partial to flies. While he was still bewailing his hard fate, and that that one ordeal of the web should not be considered sufficient punishment, his captor, as well as his companion, came to a standstill.

"This looks a likely spot—nice and shady!"

"Rather weedy, isn't it?"

"All the better. They lurk under the weeds, you know, so that their prey should not see them."

"Don't you think we had better try a deeper place?"

"This is deep enough, I tell you. They bit like savages here the day before yesterday, and that was only at the little green-tail fly. After the rain they are sure to be hungry. Be quick and unpack the basket, and give me the line and hook."

There could no longer be a doubt as to what his fate was. "He don't appear very lively," remarked one of the young gentlemen as he took Peter between his forefinger and thumb. It would have been astonishing if he had, unless the liveliness he displayed were that of madness and despair. Now indeed was the purport of that mysterious conversation made clear to him! He was to wriggle and kick on a fish-hook, and the fish were the hungry savages who were to come and bite at him. It was singular that he should have remained in ignorance so long, since, as a boy, he had, when fishing for small fry,

impaled a fly on a hook, ay, and on a crooked brass pin, for that matter, many and many a time.

"The proper way is to stick the barb right through him, is it not?" inquired the young monster who had the custody of Peter, and who, as he spoke, held the point of the cold, cruel hook within an inch of the victim's eyes. They were evidently inexperienced fishermen.

"Not right through his body where his heart and that is, would you?" replied the other dubiously.

"Why not? Are you afraid I shall hurt him?"

"Oh no! because the more you hurt him the more he'll wriggle and kick, and the better sport we shall have; but you see, if you don't mind how you fix him he'll die directly, and that would be a pity. Suppose you stick it through his wings?"

"Stay a moment! I know a better way than either. Let us tie a bit of our fine silk round his body, and so fasten him to the hook. He may serve for more than one cast then, if we are lucky."

Fainting in terror as he was when he heard these words, Peter feebly opened one eye and cast a look of gratitude on the person who had uttered them. Anything, anything rather than that either of the previous suggestions should be adopted.

And so they fastened him. It was a painful and tedious operation, and when it was completed Peter felt as though the encircling silk must cut him in halves, but the recollection of what he had escaped fortified him, and presently he was swung out, and fell souse into the stream.

This, however, though for the moment startling, was, as far as it went, a change for the better. The cool, sparkling water comforted his cramped and aching limbs, and, presently venturing to sip a little of it, he felt quite refreshed. Not that his were prospects the enjoyment of which demanded the full and unimpaired use of one's faculties. Nothing but death was before him, and it was therefore rather an advantage to have a foot or two over the cold threshold, since his whole body must inevitably follow presently.

Peter found it not at all difficult to sustain himself in the water, although he was burdened by the weight of the tiny hook, and was rather inclined to lie still on the surface, knowing that to wriggle and kick would be exactly the way to rouse some spiky-toothed monster lurking beneath a weed or stone, and so hasten his own destruction. But he was not allowed to remain passive. It was expected of him that he should kick and wriggle,



PETER'S ALARM AT THE INHUMAN PROPOSAL OF HIS CAPTOR.



APPALLING APPROACH OF THE MONSTER WITH THE SPINY JAW.

and since he did not choose to do so voluntarily, his persecutors compelled him by moving the line gently up and down.

"He is a lazy beggar!" he heard a voice on the bank exclaim.

"You had better have hung him on the hook, I think; suppose you untie him and stick him on now?"

"Hush! Don't make a noise! There's a fine fellow rising at him now; he looks hungry, and as though he meant mischief."

Hearing this, Peter was so alarmed that he made an upward jump, and instantly the "fine fellow" rose and marked him. Had Peter been in his human shape he would have observed nothing more remarkable about the fish except that it was of the stickleback breed, and that it was large and very handsome in colour; but regarding it through his tiny bluebottle eyes it presented a very different appearance. Its sides were armed with horny plates similar to those that protect the rhinoceros; along its back were three upreared spikes, each formidable to impale a bluebottle; its glaring glazy eyes were set in rigid bony sockets, and its jaws ever open and shutting disclosed a double row of teeth, compared with which, as to sharpness, the point of a needle was blunt as a pin's head. As the fish's eyes and Peter's met, the former set back his grisly lips and opened his mouth snarling like a cat, so that the affrighted bluebottle could see into it as far down as its gullet. Then the stickleback made a sudden rush forward, and Peter closed his eyes, making sure that it was all over.

And so it would have been but for the eagerness of the boy at the other end of the rod. So nearly was Peter entombed, that he heard the fish's teeth grate against the hook to which he was attached, and the icy cold mouth closing on him, when there was a sudden jerk, and he was whisked out of the jaws of death, as it were, and sent spinning high and dry in the air.

"Ah, stupidhead! you struck too quickly!" the boy who was not fishing exclaimed angrily.

"I could have declared that I saw the fly in his mouth," the other rejoined.

"So you might; but you should have waited until he had swallowed it right down into his stomach before you whipped up the line. Here, let me have a turn; he's pretty sure to come at it again now that he has smelt it. Did you see which way he went?"

"He darted amongst those weeds; just there, where the lilies are peeping up."

"Here goes for him, then!" And once more Peter felt himself whizzing through the air, and falling on to the surface of the water.

The weeds in question lay some distance from the shore, so that in casting in his line the fisher had to hold on to the bough of a bush that overhung the stream; and even then he had little command over his fishing tools, and as it happened that the water at this part was rather rapid in its running, and carried the bait along with it, it was nice work for the boy to keep it where he wished. We never can tell at its happening what is good or bad for us, and we very often moan when we should be giving thanks, and cry "Hurrah!" when our evil genius is shouting to the same tune, could we only hear him. So it was with Peter on this occasion. When the blundering boy gave up the rod and line at the impatient solicitation of his friend, Peter wrung his little front paws in an agony. "He won't make such a mistake," thought he; "he won't jerk me out of the monster's maw before I am fairly swallowed! What a shameful cruel thing to serve a poor fly so!"

But the change was for the better. The first boy, as it happened, was a patient boy; and the undue haste he displayed in jerking the bluebottle out of the stickleback's mouth was due to a dread of his brother's impetuous temper. Otherwise he would have stood on the bank, had it been necessary, till the fish had not only swallowed the bait, but digested it also, before he endeavoured to land it. Whereas his brother was just as irritable as he was even-tempered, and fiery as he was patient.

"Confound the things!" cried he.

"What things, brother?"

"These precious weeds; they'll tangle the line in a moment."

"They will if you don't handle the rod more carefully. There! I told you so. Softly, or you'll break the line."

"Dash the line! Come out of that, will you? Whew!"

"There, now you *have* done it!"

So he had. The fragile line, unable to bear the rough treatment the impatient boy was dealing it, snapped short off at the hook.

"Have you got another hook, Bob?"

"One more."

"That's lucky," said the impetuous boy. "Otherwise I should have been obliged to tuck my trousers up, and wade in after that one with the fly tied to it. Come on; let us try our luck at another part of the stream."

All this time Peter was clinging, half in and half out of the water, to the stem of a lily, scarcely able at present to see the advantage of his escape, it was so narrow. When, however, he heard the impetuous boy's words, and, better still, heard them both stroll away, their voices growing fainter the farther they retreated, he took heart and drew himself up on to the lily-leaf, quite clear of the water. From this point he obtained a view of the bank, and saw the two boys at least fifty yards away re-adjusting their tackle, and preparing again to fish.

"Saved! saved once more!" cried Peter, in a voice tremulous with joy and semi-suffocation. "Ah! what a grateful bluebottle I ought to be!" And then, hearing a slight noise in the water, he peered over the edge of his leaf, and spied the stickleback with the spikes on its spine ferociously reared, and its bony-rimmed eyes staring, and its needle-toothed mouth nervously twitching, as though wondering why Peter did not come again within his reach, and wishing above all things that he would do so.

"Ah!" exclaimed Peter, as he turned away, shudderingly, from the ugly spectacle, "I know what it is now! If I were a boy, and lived to be a thousand years old, the fish might all die of hunger before I furnished a fly for their feeding!"

Still, however, his own predicament was anything but a pleasant one. To be, as a bluebottle, half-drowned amongst a bed of weeds a dozen yards from shore, must be bad enough; but coupled with an additional affliction in the shape of a frightfully sharp and barbed hook bound to one's body, hampering the movements and rendering it hard to turn about and walk even, let alone fly, it is difficult to imagine a more uncomfortable fix. But Peter knew how necessary it was to make a move. "If it should happen that those cruel ruffians lose their other hook, they will be for returning to look for the one they left sticking in the weeds, as they thought!" said he, and with that he set about making his way towards the shore.

But it was tedious work. Had he been able to fly with the iron weight attached to him, he could have accomplished the task in less time even than it would take to describe it; but this he could not do. Once he tried it, and came so near tumbling into the water where he knew the hungry stickleback to be still lurking, that his heart leaped to his throat, as the saying is, and he resolved to travel the distance afoot, however long it might take him. And, indeed, the time it took, and the fatigue it involved, was terrible. Now and then he was enabled, by dint of prodigious exertion, to step from one weed-leaf or grass-blade to another; but more frequently he had to travel, dragging the weight of the iron

hook with him, right to the top of a stalk two feet high, and down the other side, and up again, and down again, till his poor little legs seemed heavy as lead. As for the cord about his waist, that of itself was no inconvenience; on the contrary, indeed, and as every one must at once perceive who has seen how invariably men setting out on extraordinary pedestrian feats fix a belt or tie a handkerchief about them. But the burden of the hook was tremendous; it was as though one of the human pedestrians above alluded to had essayed to walk for a wager with the anchor of a merchant ship stuck, fluke downwards, between the small of his back and the belt that encircled him. Even in this, however, Peter was lucky. Had the hook been fixed under his belly instead of on his back, he would have been helpless to rise as a capsized turtle.

It was growing dark, and there yet remained a good four yards out of the twelve to accomplish ere he reached the bank. This alarmed him. "Presently," said he, "I shall be unable to see to set one foot before another, and I dare not stay out here all night. If I was to climb to the top of one of these reeds, I am sure that, tired out as I am, I should fall asleep, and perhaps be blown off into the water, and become a supper for that horrid spiky fish after all!"

Peter was perched, panting, on a clump of tangled weed as he spoke, looking wistfully towards the shore, which each moment grew dimmer as the veil of evening encompassed it, when with startling suddenness a frightful sound made itself heard immediately in his rear. It was the most extraordinary noise that ever had greeted Peter's ears in the whole course of either of his existences, and for the moment struck him as being like nothing so much as the sound that might be expected from an ill-tempered raven, provided it were as big as a cow, and afflicted with a swelled throat.

With an activity that he would have thought impossible to him a minute before, Peter skipped round, and, to his horror, discovered that the apparition awaiting his gaze was in no wise less terrifying than the mysterious noise. Within a foot of him, and eyeing him out of a pair of optics flickering like phosphorus rubbed on the finger-tips, was a great yellow and speckled monster in frog shape, with a vast gaping mouth, and claws to its slippery-looking limbs, and a pot belly ominously capacious-looking. For a few moments the creature gazed on Peter in stupid astonishment, as though reflecting whether he had ever seen so singular-looking an insect before; and then, with a croak as loud as the first, he made a great spring forward, with the intention of settling the question by swallowing the strange thing.



THE INDIAN FROG IS AMAZED AT SIGHT OF A FLY OF THE HOOK-BACK SPECIES.



And now there happened a singular circumstance, and one which furnished another instance of the extraordinary protecting influence under which Peter was living. Expanding its pike-like jaws, the frog made a snap at Peter, who, in expectation of the fatal grip, instinctively shrank down on to the leaf he was lodged on, so that the frog was compelled to bring his mouth close to the surface of the leaf so that he might lick up his prey. Being provoked, he did it sharply and angrily, and the consequence was that the little fish-hook clipped him by the upper lip as neatly as possible. Once again was the bluebottle favoured. Stung with pain, and altogether bewildered as to what had happened to him, with his mouth agape, and Peter hanging from his lip, the frog, croaking his loudest, leaped. It was the turn of a straw which way he leaped, and the turn was in the bluebottle's favour, for he leaped towards the bank, and, as would naturally follow, he continued to leap in the same direction until the weeds were cleared, and, as the unhappy prisoner could tell, from the loud rasping noise of the frog's claws on the ground, the shore was gained.

But the frog, although not much hurt, was too frightened to stop. As though for a wager on which his life depended, he kept on hop, hop, hop, all the while making such hideous noises as never before issued from a frog's mouth. At last, after a journey of at least an hour's duration, but which seemed to Peter more like a long night, the affrighted frog came to a standstill, sheerly from want of breath to accomplish another hop, and stood puffing and blowing, and trembling in every limb. All this time Peter had never once lost his consciousness, and his great fear was that the aquatic instincts of his unwilling carrier would presently lead him to some pool or pond, and so reduce him, the bluebottle, to as dire a strait as that he had last escaped from. But there are conditions of mind in which frogs, as well as men, are oblivious to the dictates of reason or instinct; and this was the case with the frog in question; so that, as it happened, it was in a field and under a hedge where the creature halted, and for some time did nothing but stand still as its emotion would permit, uttering a low pitiful wailing that went to Peter's heart to hear.

The foremost idea in Peter's mind, however, was, how would this last and most singular of all his adventures end? Was he doomed to be dependent from a frog's lip through the rest of his life? Would the frog, afraid to stir ever again, stay where he was until he died? or would he presently hit on a means of ridding himself of the horrible hook? Whichever way Peter viewed the probabilities they were all woefully against him, especially the latter, since he could make no doubt that if the creature did succeed in

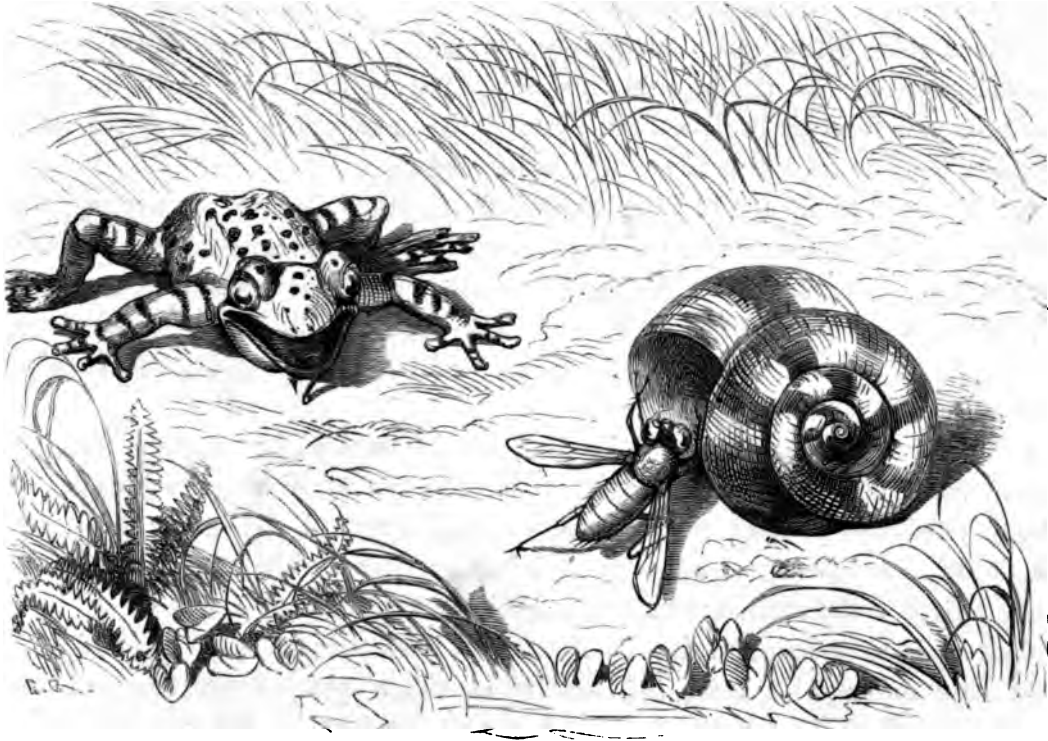
ridding himself of the instrument that was hurting his lip, his very first act would be to revenge himself on the insect who had been the origin of all the mischief.

For a very long time the unlucky Batrachian evinced no sort of disposition to attempt his freedom, but by-and-by Peter was conscious of a strange vibration through his body as though the silk cord that bound him to the hook was being meddled with. The sensation was so peculiar that, for a moment, he could not make out what the reason of it could be ; but it suddenly occurred to him—the frog was nibbling at the cord. Frogs had not been excluded from the list of animals against which Peter had offended during his boy life, and he now distinctly recollected that during an anatomical examination he once made of a frog, by means of a pocket-knife, he discovered that the creature had teeth in its upper jaw. It was with these implements, then, that *his* frog was at work on the silk cord !

The next five minutes was an anxious time with Peter. He had no doubt that if his enemy succeeded in gnawing through his bonds (and that he would succeed in time he had no doubt, for already he was aware that the cord was slackening), he would be released from his unpleasant position, and fall to the ground. But then what would the frog do ? “ If I was only strong enough to fly the instant I am dropped, all might yet be well,” thought Peter ; “ but I am afraid my wings will be of little use to me. I must make the best of my legs, and run as fast as I can, if I cannot fly.”

And scarcely had he arrived at this conclusion when the last band of silk thread that held him gave way suddenly, and down he fell. The release was so unexpected that for an instant he could scarcely believe it real. The frog, too, seemed somewhat astonished. Evidently, by the expression in his phosphorescent eyes, he was aware that his burden was lightened, though he was still incommoded by the hook. This caused him to desist from his gnawing, and look about him ; and then he spied Peter, who, benumbed and cramped and altogether helpless to move, lay as he had fallen, his mouth gasping and his eyes feebly blinking in supplication for mercy as the monster, evidently with a dawning consciousness of what was the true condition of affairs, glared at him with a look full of the deepest malice, at the same time uttering a harsh croaking sound that, although Peter was quite ignorant of the frog tongue, clearly meant “ So *you* are the insignificant little wretch that has been causing me all this agony ! It is to you that I owe the horrible sensation that has plagued my upper lip during the past half-hour ! ” And then he gathered himself up for a spring, with an expression in his luminous eyes that is altogether indescribable. What was the quality of the look he gave that unfortunate bluebottle may, however, be easily

guessed when it is told that it instantly nerved him to all the exertion he was master of, sending him running his hardest, fluttering his weak wings the while, over the moist ground where the grass grew. Presently, and full in his path, he spied a harbour of refuge, and, without thinking twice on the propriety of the proceeding, he bolted straight into it. It was an empty snail-shell.



TO AVOID HIS SPECKLED ENEMY, PETER AVAILS HIMSELF OF THE SHELTER OF A SHELL.

CHAPTER III.

It was a snail-shell of large size that in which Peter took refuge, and he crawled to the furthest extremity of it, and there crouched down. His plight was miserable indeed. Since the early morning when he so rashly gave way to his appetite for honey, not a particle of food had passed his lips, the fish-hook to which he had been so long bound had partially chafed the skin from his back, and he still felt the strangulating effect of the silk cord that, since the morning and until recently, had girded his waist.

But his dread of the terrible frog excelled all his other ailments. It was only natural—Peter argued from his own wicked disposition—that soon as the creature recovered from its fright it would promptly seek out the prime cause of its affliction and take revenge on him, and so he lay scarce daring to breathe lest he might stir the light shell and betray his hiding. At last, however, exhausted nature asserted her right, and, without knowing it, he fell asleep.

It was so very dark when he awoke, that, for the moment, he imagined that he had dropped into a doze of only a few minutes' duration, but when he grew broader awake and discovered how perfectly refreshed he was, and how cool and comfortable and free from the aches and pains that had tormented him previous to his losing consciousness, he at once arrived at the conclusion that he had enjoyed a sound night's repose.

One would have supposed that, by this time at least, the punishments he had endured would have softened his heart, and instilled in him a spirit of meekness and perfect humility; but, alas!—and therein is shown how soaked and soddened he was in the peculiar wickedness for which he was doomed to do just penance—his first thoughts were of a congratulatory character on his great good luck in escaping from his terrible peril of the night before. He recollected all about it; all about his catching on the sunny wall; his baiting with the fish-hook; his escape therefrom; his attachment to the hideous frog, and the torture he endured ere he was so miraculously released.

"All my own fault from first to last," said Peter. "Had I not been such a simpleton as to sit down on a brick within easy reach of the first villainous boy that came that way with his fishing-tackle, nothing would have been amiss. After all, however, I'm the luckiest

bluebottle alive, I verily believe, or I shouldn't have come out of all the scrapes that my stupidity has dragged me into since I sported a pair of wings, and after all here I am this morning feeling so fresh and jolly! Upon my word I seem to have grown quite stout in the night, so much so that my wings press against the roof of my house, and I can't move them. Pah! fancy a free bluebottle, with all the world before him, being compelled to lodge in such a dingy hole as this, and all through a contemptible goggle-eyed frog! I'd have frogs abolished if I had my way. I'd have everything abolished but bluebottles and sugar. I suppose my enemy has crawled and hopped back to his reeds and weeds by this time, so I'll be off. Hurrah for a high fly in the sunshine!"

Now all this time, since he awoke, he had, as he imagined, lain with his face to the wall, so that there was no use in opening his eyes until he backed out of the shell; now, however, that he essayed to shift his quarters, he found himself strangely trammelled and embarrassed. Truly he must have grown stout in the night, for now he filled the shell completely. Stranger things still had happened to him. He had lost his legs—he had lost his wings too—and wonderingly putting his head out at his door, he experienced an extraordinary sensation of his eyes growing out of his head, like flowers at the extremity of their stalks. In his fright he made a desperate effort to struggle away from the bonds that held him, but all in vain. As he crawled—and very slow and painful crawling it was—the load on his back remained, and would not be shaken off, try hard as he might. It was impossible to evade the terrible truth that so hardly pressed him for recognition—he had become a snail!

Now indeed was Peter in despair, and, in the bitterness of his sorrow, he flung himself on his back and rocked to and fro, bemoaning his hard fate and increasing his naturally damp condition by an unavailing flood of tears.

"I'd better be a blackbeetle, a worm, anything but a wretched thing such as I am now," cried he. "To be sure I have been hard on snails in my time, but I don't repent it. I wish somebody would be as hard on me—ten times harder if possible—and stamp my wretched life out!"

And withdrawing himself into his prison, as he called it, he gave way to his woe.

Presently he heard a slight noise within a little distance of him.

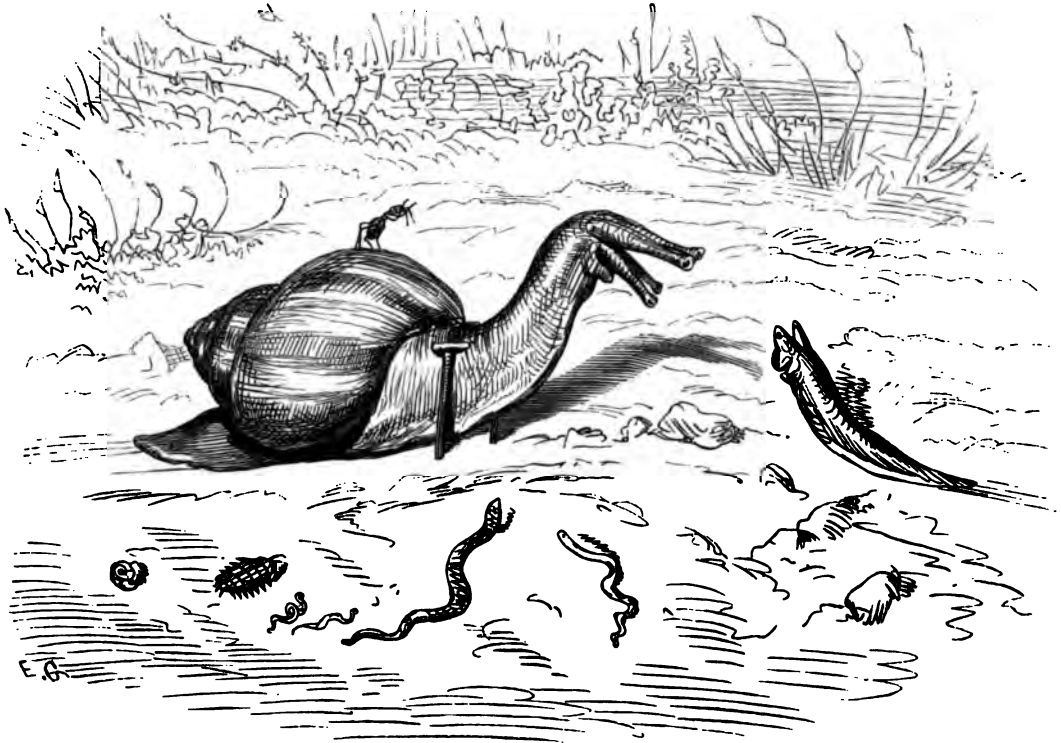
"If that's the frog," was his wicked thought, "I'll get in his way, so that he may eat me if he has a mind to."

And with all the desperation of a suicide, he put out his head. The only creature,

however, that met his gaze was a slug crawling cheerfully, though slowly, over the grass. The slug perceived Peter, and, raising his head respectfully, nodded.

"Shall we have rain this morning, neighbour?" it asked.

If anything were wanting to convince Peter of his utter degradation, it was now supplied when he found himself familiarly addressed by a loathsome, slimy slug.



PETER THE SNAIL BEGUILDES THE INNOCENT SLUG TO AN UNTIMELY END.

"It may rain brickbats for all I care. I wish it might, and so thick and fast that there would be no escaping 'em," replied he disdainfully; "if you want information concerning the weather, perhaps you'll be so good as to seek it, not of such as I am, but of your equals."

"I humbly ask your pardon, ma'am," said the slug, who by this time had contrived to crawl close to where Peter was fuming and fretting; "but I thought, to be sure, it was to

inquire concerning the weather that you put your head out at your door. Not that it makes much difference to so exalted a creature as you are whether it rains or shines, with a beautiful house to live in and shelter you. Oh, how very happy you must be!"

Now the poor slug spoke in all sincerity; but it unluckily happened that from a human point of view the expression of his countenance was against the assumption, the mouth of the slug being wide and having an upward curve at the corners, and its cheeks, as one may call them, somewhat puckered, and its eyes comically screwed up; in fact, the countenance of the slug, from a human point of view, is decidedly a smiling, not to say a grinning countenance. Snail as he was in form, there was still human power in Peter's vision, and regarding the creature's preposterous speech, as well as its comical face, it seemed to him that the slug was making fun of him, and sanguinary thoughts of revenge instantly entered his wicked head.

"Come closer—I'm rather hard of hearing," said Peter the snail, all the while revolving in his mind what means were at his disposal to carry his murderous intention into effect.

"I can't come very fast," replied the slug; "you must know, great madam, that an hour or so since I had the misfortune to find myself involved in a pinch of salt that some field-labourer had dropped while getting his dinner, as I suppose. I need not tell you how salt serves our tribe. I am that tender over my under parts that I could scream out with the pain every time I move. I have a longish way to go, too, before I reach home; not like you, honoured madam, who are always at home with your house on your back."

And so, pleasantly discoursing, the unsuspecting slug approached its enemy, who each moment chafed more and more. "That's another stroke of insolence on the part of this contemptible wretch," thought Peter, when the slug addressed him as "madam," ignorant of a fact which doubtless would have been made clear to him presently had he been less headstrong and impatient, that creatures of his species and for peculiar reasons invariably address each other as feminine; "it's only a polite way of calling me an old woman;" and when the unlucky slug made its second allusion to Peter being always at home, and carrying his house on his back, his fury knew no bounds, and the slug being now near enough, Peter stretched out his neck, and seizing his victim in his teeth drew it towards him by the tail, and before the astonished slug could open its mouth in remonstrance Peter flung it down, and rolling himself atop of it, brutally sawed at its tender body with the sharp outer rim of its shell till its life was extinct.

But swift retribution followed the bloodthirsty act. Even while he—Peter, that is—

was panting after the exertions the murder had cost him, he was conscious of a tremendous noise of whirring and fluttering, and instantly afterwards he felt as though a spear had been hurled through the roof of his shell, penetrating some inches or so, it seemed, into his back, and then followed a sensation of rising at a rapid rate through the air.

Instinctively shrinking into his house, he was for a few seconds unaware of the character of the new misfortune that had befallen him. For a little while the swift movement through the air continued, accompanied by the fluttering and flapping sound, and then whatever was his captor came to a standstill, and disimpaled him from the spear, and laid him down, and then all was silent.

It is scarcely too much to say that Peter had in his consternation held his breath since the moment when he was pounced on till now. The wound in his back was very painful, but not so much so as were his apprehensions as he lay huddled up and all in the dark as to what would next happen to him. Is it all over or but just begun? Am I on the ground, or where am I? Who attacked me? What creature is there that carries a spear and makes a whirring, fluttering noise as it goes? These and countless other questions presented themselves in vain for solution to Peter's amazed mind, till, finding that the silence continued, he could contain his curiosity no longer, but slowly and cautiously put out his head from his shell to see.

There are no blackbirds proper in India, but there are relatives of that English family that with no great pretension to music possess to a remarkable degree the characteristic appetite of the tribe—an appetite for snails. The bird that had seized on Peter was no exception to the rule. It was a young bird, scarcely fledged in fact, which probably accounted for the bungle it made of flying; but it was plucky as a bantam, and did not for a moment hesitate to attack Peter, although it must have seen him with horns extended and of terrible warlike aspect. Besides this it was an artful bird, as early birds on the look-out to catch the first worm, or any other sort of prey that comes under their observation, are tolerably sure to be, and all the while it was only standing aside on a limb of the tree into which it had conveyed its captive, silent as a bird carved in wood, but with a steadfast eye for Peter's head, whenever it might happen to protrude.

Presently, and as already stated, it did protrude, and then with a hundred times the celerity of a wink, the beak of the bird shot down, and Peter was pinned by the nape of the neck.

Had it been an old bird that had him, that moment would have been Peter's last; but



PETER THE SNAIL GETS ACQUAINTED WITH A JOLLY YOUNG BLACKBIRD.

it was a young bird—very young, and, as might be expected, by no means an adept at smashing a snail-shell. Had he been a bird of experience he would not have been content with grasping the nape of his victim's neck only, that part being spongy and yielding, and affording at best but flimsy holding; he would have pinned him by that tough sucker-like single foot by the aid of which the snail gets along, and so securing it could have banged the house of its prey about its ears by half-a-dozen blows against anything hard enough. As the case stood, however, although it tried might and main, and shook Peter as a terrier dog shakes a rat, and beat it against the tree, it could not accomplish its desire completely. Better would it have been for Peter had it been able to do so, as any one would have said had he been there to see his affrighted looks, with his eyes starting out at the extremity of his eye-stalks and his mouth agape, as he was torn and battered and bruised.

But it was not his persecutor that Peter saw out of his horror-stricken eyes. What he saw, as he was being shaken and mauled and mangled was a long-ago vision of a little boy and of a wicker-cage hanging against a garden-wall, and containing a blackbird, and in the cage there was purposely placed a round smooth stone. The blackbird, capering and hopping to and fro and busying itself at the round stone, seemed to afford the little boy great amusement, for he was dancing and laughing and clapping his hands. Presently the blackbird, with his cruel beak champing and with ferocity in its eyes, came to the bars of the cage, and the little boy, plunging his hand into his jacket-pocket, withdrew a live snail which he gave to the blackbird, who promptly set to work beating it to death against the stone, while the little boy quite screamed at sight of the fun, and bent this way and that with laughter. There was no mistaking the garden, for close by where the blackbird was there was an apple-tree with "P.W." gashed in its tender bark; neither was there any mistake as to who the little boy was—Peter knew *him* well enough.

This might have been the end of the vision, or there might have been more of it, only for an accident. Like all young birds, the one bent on Peter's destruction was rash and passionate, and instead of coolly deliberating on a better method of unkennelling his game than the one he was at present so unsatisfactorily attempting, he only flung and flouted more vehemently, and the result was that he presently flung the snail out of his mouth, and into the deep hollow of the old tree, against the decayed sides of which it bounced and rattled until it reached the bottom, and there lay out of harm's way.

But Peter knew nothing of this fifth miraculous escape. With his tiny brain already

in great confusion from his agony of body and mind, in the very act of striking against the top of the hollow tree, as the bird flung him away, he lost all consciousness, and it might have been a stick or stone that rattled to the bottom for all the signs of animation he evinced. He had a soft bed to fall on, however. The heart of the tree was perished, so that from top to bottom of it was nothing but a shell, and on the ground a little heap of dust soft as down, ground out of the tough timber by the iron fingers of decay. Had the snail been an egg it would scarce have broken under such conditions.

An egg broken for eating, however, was not more crushed and chipped than was poor Peter's house, and his body was maimed, and his mouth was ajar, and one eye-stalk fell in and the other shot out in the deadest way. Yet Peter was not dead. As the reader must have remarked, he was peculiarly fortunate at a crisis, and his luck (if luck it might be called) did not desert him on the present occasion. When a person faints it is an approved course to let him smell burnt feathers or some pungent salts, or better still is sometimes found, and efficacious when all other remedies have been tried and failed, a pinch of good dry strong snuff applied to the nostrils. This last stimulant Peter found ready to hand in the fine high-dried powdered touchwood on which he alighted as he fell. He fell headfirst, and was buried nose and eyes in it, and then he rolled over on to his back. I do not say that the powder titillating his organs of scent brought him to life at once; his case was much too desperate for that. No, what the fine wood-dust did for Peter was pretty much what a little coal-dust does when applied to a low-burning and nearly-exhausted fire—it kept the life gently stirring and smouldering until such time as some more powerful agent was applied to rouse its vitality.

There is nothing so potent to awaken a flagging fire as a wind, and it was a wind that brought Peter to his senses—a wind that was all the more urgent because it had so narrow a crevice to force its way through—a mere chink no broader than a knife-blade at the bottom of the hollow trunk close to the ground.

How many times the little voice of the wind came piping in at the crevice, and how many times the defunct tree had so dismally responded, before Peter returned to life, is uncertain. When it happened, however, it was night, for, opening his eyes languidly, Peter looked upward as he lay, and all was as black as pitch. Usually snails have no ears, but they are common snails; Peter, being a particularly uncommon snail, was more favoured. He had ears, and he heard the wind whistling in at the crevice in the bark. He was now too benumbed to feel pain, and being likewise much confused in his brain, his

idea was, if it might be called an idea, that he was still a bluebottle hiding in a snail-shell, and that the sound he heard was the frog whistling to find him. But, as his faculties gradually returned to him, he fancied that he discovered voices in the wind very different from the croaking and whistling of a frog. Whether it was fancy or reality may never be known, since Peter himself was unable to say with any degree of certainty, but what he seemed to hear was two tiny voices conversing together concerning him.

"Let him die! let him die!" piped one tiny voice, "he is fit for nothing else. He has been tried, and tried, and tried again, and all in vain. Let him die, I say."

"Shall we not give him another trial? As yet he is not half through with his degrees of purgatory."

"No, nor a quarter," responded the first voice, which was sterner than the second. "He must at least be put all the way back to his original starting-point, as a punishment for his murder of the slug. Really I think he had better die."

"I'm quite of your opinion, my friend," thought Peter ruefully, as he heard this last speech. "If I am to endure much more of this" (the aches of his body began to return now), "I'd very much sooner there was an end of it."

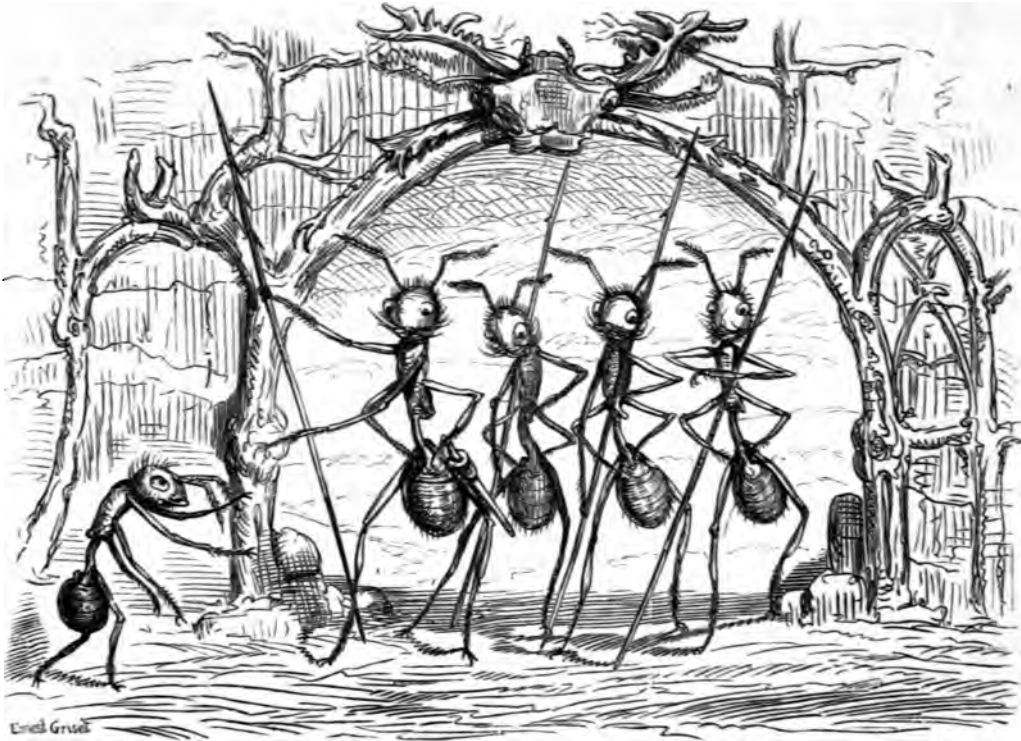
"But it's such a terrible thing to die," urged the first little voice. "If he knew the ever-enduring delights that crown a good or even a thoroughly purged life, he would rather suffer a thousand more penalties than he has at present—suffer them patiently and humbly, and without the least rebellion or shrinking."

"Truly it is a terrible thing to die utterly," spoke the second little voice in tones of relenting; "how can we convince him of the value and utility of tiny life?"

"If he were changed into an ant, now?" suggested the kind voice.

"So be it," answered the other, after some little hesitation and in tones of reluctant relenting—"an ant he shall become!"

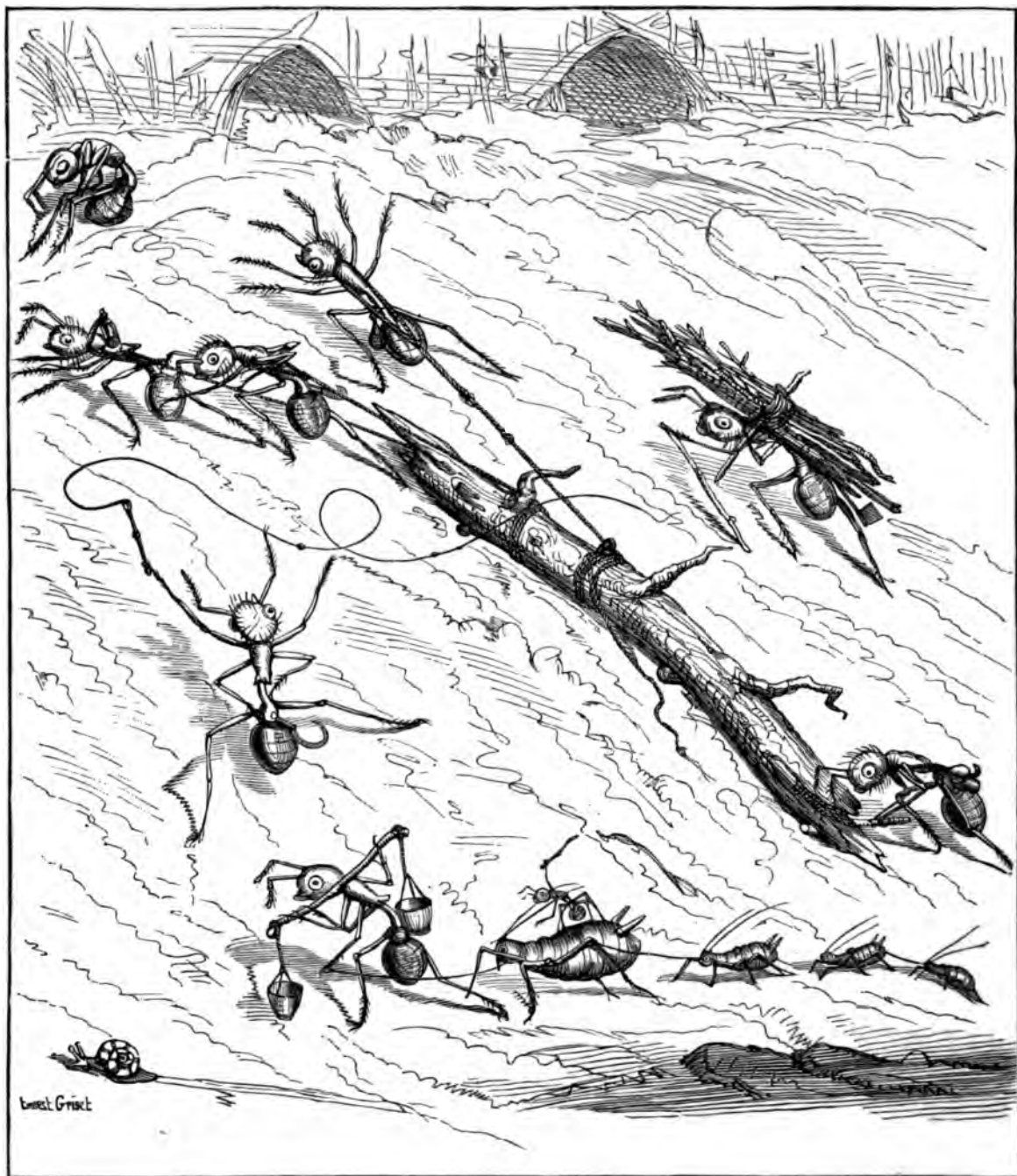
At this moment so fierce a wind blew in at the crevice that the whole mass of fine wood-dust was stirred and whirled round and round within the hollow bark, as though its particles had heard the decision of the second voice, and were dancing for joy in consequence. The wind, however, was not strong enough to whirl Peter along with the dust. It swept it from round him and from under him, until he felt himself sinking down and down, and then suddenly there was a lull in the wind, and down came the whirling fragments in a heap, smothering poor Peter the snail completely.



THE OFFICER OF THE GUARDS CHALLENGES PETER THE ANT.

CHAPTER IV.

It can scarcely be said that Peter was crushed out of life by the falling fragments of bark and dust and rotten wood. It would be more correct to describe his condition as that of a drunken man who makes his way along a road all unconsciously. Somehow or another Peter must have escaped from the hollow tree. It has been mentioned that there was a chink in the decaying walls of it, through which the wind whistled; perhaps he got out that way—perhaps those mystic beings whose voices the crushed snail had heard, discoursing his welfare, had a hand in releasing him from his dark prison. If this was the



ANT(z)-SLAVERY.

case, there is no use in inquiring as to the means, for the mystic beings were all-powerful, and could have drawn him through the solid bark, or even caused him to bound up and out at the little hole atop of the hollow tree he had fallen in at. Anyhow Peter got out of his prison.

"Now then, wake up! Either shift your lazy body out of our path and let those work that will, or get up and lend us a hand."

"Don't you know better than to lie down to sleep in a public path? You are big enough to know better."

Without doubt Peter was asleep, but at sound of the strange angry voices he awoke with a sudden start, looking about him in speechless amazement—as well he might. It was no longer night, but a bright sunshiny morning, and before him were five of the most extraordinary creatures it was ever his fate to fall in with. They were of a sort of copper-colour, and their hides looked as smooth and impenetrable as the metal mentioned. At first sight they appeared most formidable monsters. Their heads were shaped like an acorn, and were adorned with what seemed like horns of some elastic material such as whalebone set with tiny spikes from base to point, and over which the creature evidently had as perfect control as over its legs. Their eyes were goggled and stood out beside the horns staring in the sternest manner, and each wore a rough and bristling moustache. Round their slender waists these strange creatures wore a girdle set with sharp points, and each had six legs covered with coarse hair, and terminating with a singular-looking apparatus that was like the head of a pickaxe, with a sucker at the part where the handle should be. They were hard at work, early as it was, and evidently they were tremendously strong. Small as they were, they were lugging along between them a wheaten straw fully fifty times their united length, and though they did not move very quickly with it, they stuck to it bravely, straining their limbs like willing waggon-horses.

For several seconds Peter was too amazed to do anything more than stare. In obedience to the gruffly-given command of the foreman of the labouring gang he had stepped aside out of the way; but it was not until they had gone ahead for fully two yards that he recovered from the effects of his astonishment. "What are they?" was the first question he asked himself. "They are in the shape of ants, but ants are a thousand times smaller. I could set my foot down on and smash more ants than I could count in an hour; but I don't believe I could as much as kick over one of these terrible-looking fellows even if I tried. What am I? I am not a snail, that's certain, for I have no house on my back; besides, I

am too nimble to be a snail. See how I skipped away when I was told to get out of the road just now. They can't eat me for asking a civil question. I'll go after them, and hear what they've got to say about it."

And so he did. The straw-carriers had paused and set down their load for a spell of rest as Peter approached them, and were puffing, and blowing, and wiping the perspiration from their faces with their hairy forearms. "Here he comes after us!" he heard one of them remark; "did any one ever see such a lazy, sleepy-headed booby?"

"If you please," said Peter humbly, "will you kindly tell me where I am? I—I believe that I have lost my way."

"I can tell you what you are," replied the creature addressed with a look of contempt, in which his fellow-labourers agreed.

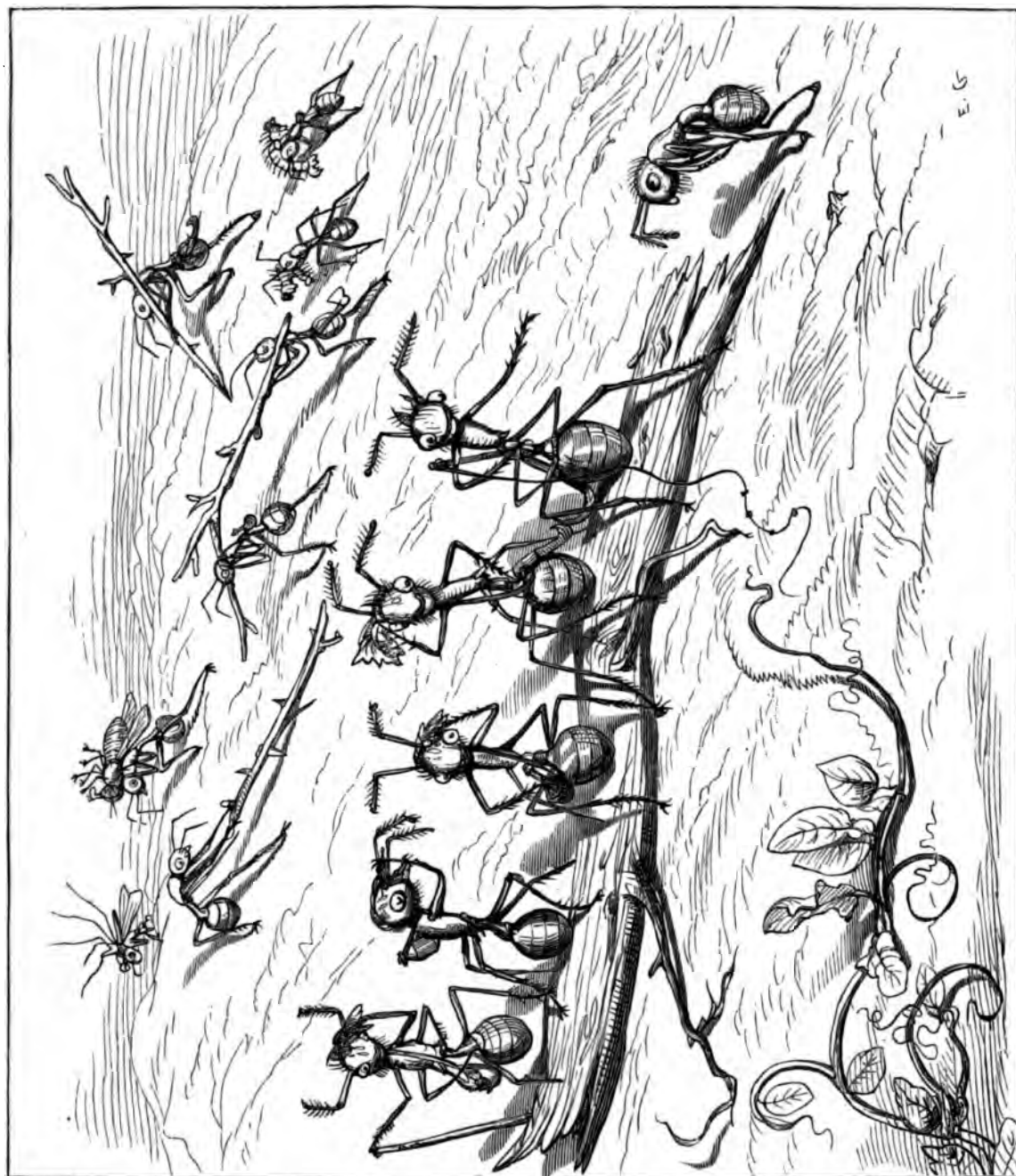
"What am I, if you please?"

"More rogue than fool, for all your innocent-looking face," replied the creature. "I tell you what, my friend; take my advice and keep out of sight of our officers, or you may happen to catch a drubbing. Lazy ants don't get much mercy here."

"Am I an ant, then?" asked Peter with a sinking heart. "Are you sure that I am an ant?"

At this the five ants looked at each other, and broke into a funny sort of noise something like laughing, and without deigning to make Peter any other response to his last question, they re-shouldered their load and trudged off.

But the truth was that Peter was not thoroughly astonished when he discovered exactly how the matter stood. He was not without a glimmer of recollection of the mysterious conversation he had heard when he lay a crushed and battered snail amongst the dust of the hollow tree. "So be it; an ant he shall become!" was the concluding sentence of the conversation in question, and without doubt an ant he was—one of those shiny-brown little insects he had known while in human life, whose only business, as far as he had ever been able to make out, consisted in rushing about in the most insane manner, as though they had lost their way, or else in boring holes in the ground and grubbing up funny-looking little heaps that people called ant-hills. As a boy Peter never could see any good in ants except for the fun that was to be got out of them seeing them running in a troop for their lives, when by one lift of his toe he overset their castle, or by the insertion of a charged tobacco-pipe stem in at the roof, made them all turn out groggy and staggering as a flock of drunken men reeling out of an alehouse. To him they were poor, stolid, stupid



things, who, knowing their meanness, were glad to hide themselves in the earth, their lives being only a source of harass and worry to them, so that it was rather a charity than a sin to clap one's foot on a thousand of them at a time.

Now, however, that his eyes—his ant's eyes—were fully opened to the true state of the case, he could scarcely credit their evidence. The place he was in was not a random earth-heap such as he imagined an ant-hill to be, but quite a little town, with streets, and crescents, and lanes, and buildings with pillars and noble arched roofs. The place where he stood was close by a sort of back way out of the hill, so that looking that way he could see just a twinkling of sunshine that showed the way out, while looking the other way he obtained a fair view of a greater part of the interior.

Truly had the labourer ant spoken when he gave Peter to understand that idleness was insufferable in those premises. Every one—and Peter could not count a tenth of the number of ants that swarmed there—was busily engaged at some sort of work; but generally they were employed as builders, extending the dimensions of the castle, digging out foundations, using their hind-feet as picks and shovels, and turning up the earth by kicking dexterously out behind, while others stood on the heap so accumulated and kicked it a little further, when a third gang took it up with as much system and good management as navvies, who in digging a deep trench raise the "stuff" excavated from stage to stage till the top is reached. Others were plastering walls and levelling pavements, using their front legs as trowels. As for the five fellows who had fetched the pillar through the back door, they had toiled on up the lane until they arrived at the square where building was going on, and had there delivered their load to the artisans, who at once set about rearing it to support a roof, plastering it with a brown cement made of earth and spittle, so that it might be stronger and match the rest of the building as to colour.

Interested as Peter was at the curious spectacle, he had no mind to join the workers. "If they had need of assistance these five fellows would have asked it when they came up with me dragging their load. It isn't so long since I was a human being that I have forgotten the fate of offered service. It is no concern of mine. It is all very pretty, and very creditable, and very comfortable for them that like it—I shouldn't. I'm only a make-believe ant after all, and have got no natural taste for working like a nigger for the privilege of living in a cellar. Nobody invited me here, and I have already been told that I am in the way. I know nothing about plastering and digging; if I must be an ant, I prefer my liberty and sunshine."

And, still the selfish Peter as of old, he turned about and ran along nimbly on his six legs ("This is better than being a wretchedly damp slow snail," said he), making his way towards the glimmer of sunshine, and presently his heart was rejoiced to see clear abroad; and the blue sky, and the trees, and the green grass.

"Better out there than in this dismal hole!" exclaimed Peter exultantly, and putting on extra speed, he hurried to the entrance. Here, however, he met with unexpected interruption. Four giant ants, of different build from the working class and more formidably armed, stepped out of the shade and confronted him.

"Halt!" cried the leader, making a gesture of so threatening a nature that Peter pulled up short instantly.

"Give the word," said the guard.

"I don't know what you mean, gentlemen," replied Peter, quaking.

"The pass-word, quick; you can't go out without, you must know that well enough."

"I know no word. I am a peaceably-disposed ant, and want words with no one. Let me pass if you please."

"We have no time to waste in fooling," exclaimed the sentinel, stepping forward and collaring Peter unceremoniously. "Do you know the pass-word?"

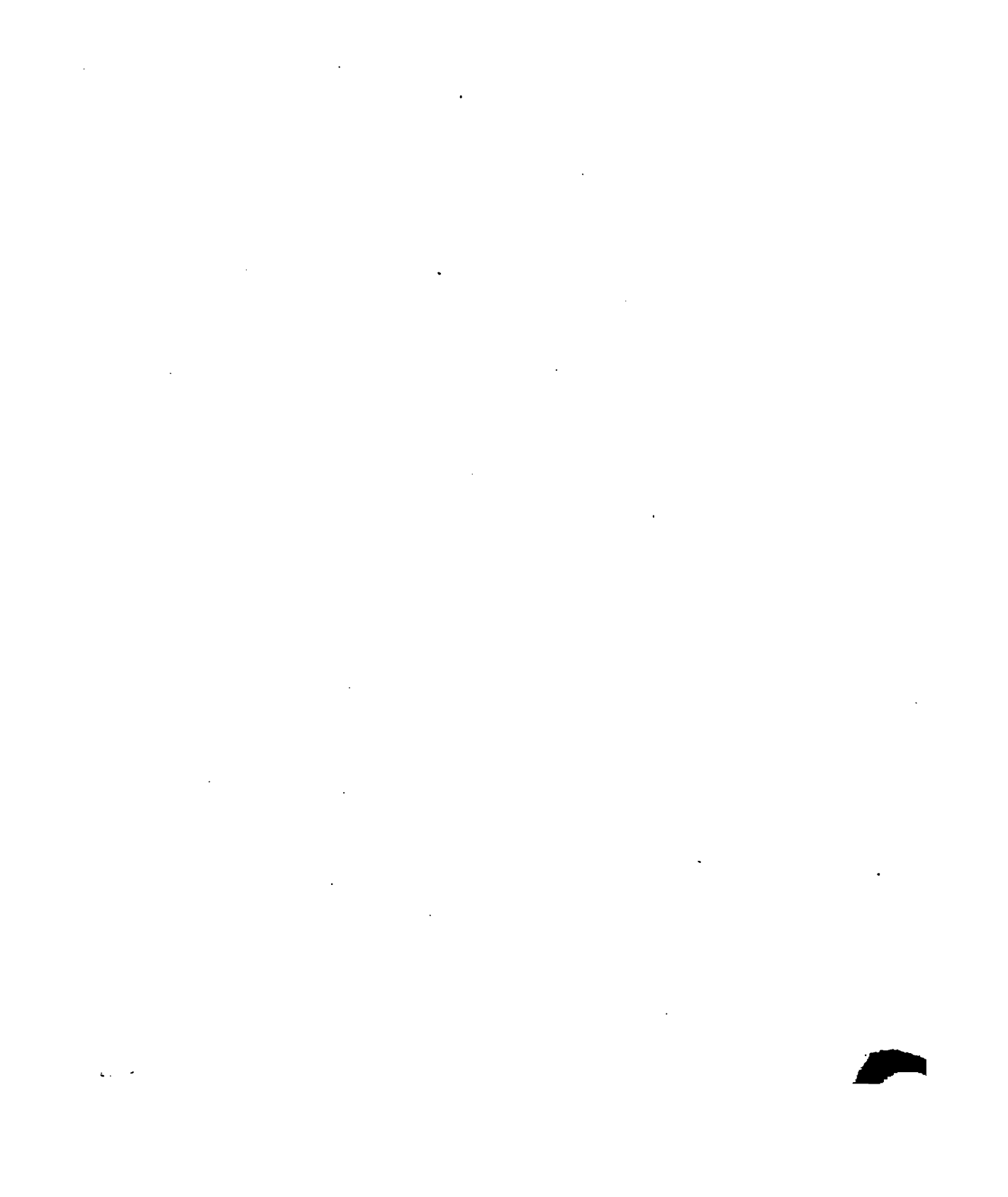
"I would mention it in a moment if I did, gentlemen," replied Peter the ant pleadingly. "I am quite a stranger here, and utterly ignorant of your ways. I——"

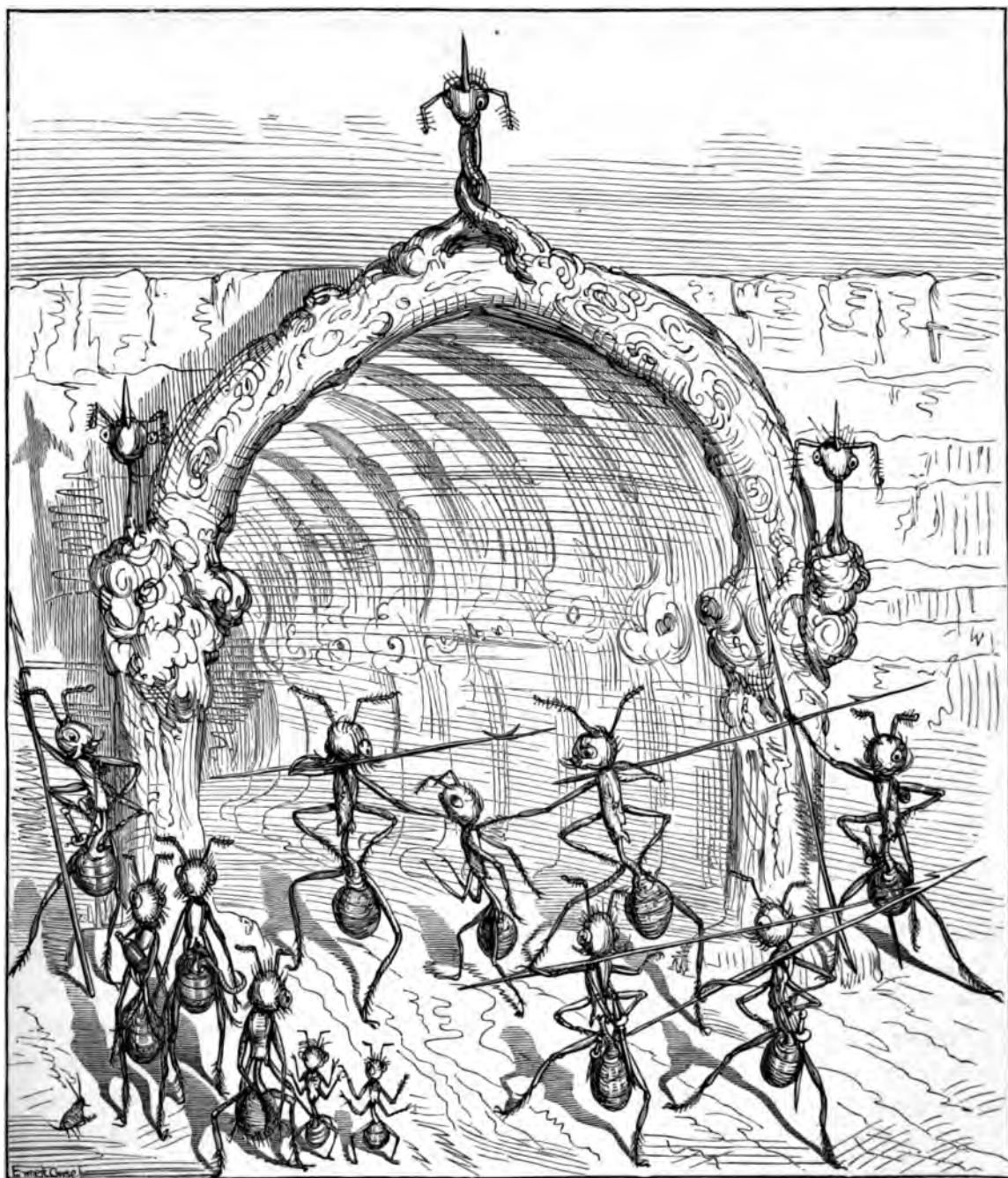
"A deserter!" interrupted the guard. "Come along. We know how to deal with such rascals as you." And with that he beckoned to his comrades, and they at once seized on Peter, and hurried him back the way he had come. On the road they overtook the five labourers before mentioned, who, having delivered their load of straw, were bound for the outer world in search of more building material. "Ah, it's time that you took charge of him," said they in reference to the captive. "Now he'll know what it is to be lazy."

"Do you know him, then?" inquired the officer of the soldier. "What trade is he? What part of the works did he desert from?"

"All that we know about him is that a little time since, as we were carrying in our last load, we nearly stumbled over him as he lay fast asleep in the middle of the road," said the foreman of labourers.

"What! asleep on the highway, and the sun up an hour and more!" exclaimed the





THE PRISONER AT THE PORTAL OF THE HALL OF JUSTICE.

officer in horror. "Can it be possible? Come back all or you; we may want you as witnesses before the magistrate."

And so, with Peter drooping in terror in their midst, they marched on and on, keeping so cruel a grip on his limbs that he was ready to cry out in pain, until the party arrived at a secluded part of the town, where there was a low archway in the wall. There were three points above the archway—one in the middle and one on either side—and on each of the points was impaled the head of an ant, denoting the place to be a hall of justice, if not of execution. To and fro in front of the archway slowly walked two soldier-ants. They worked as they walked, however; each sentry had tucked under his left fore-arm a little bundle of what appeared to be very fine grass; but, as he strode up and down, he was busily engaged in shredding the grass still finer by help of his mandibles.

"Prisoner for trial," explained one of Peter's custodians, in reply to the challenge of one of the sentries on duty.

"What's his offence?"

"Idleness."

"What!"

If in answer to the sentry's question the officer had replied "child-murder" or even "manslaughter," the amazement and indignation visible on the face of those who heard the accusation could not have been more marked.

"Take him in," said the sentries, winking their goggle eyes at each other maliciously; "he'll catch it."

As Peter the ant was passed in, although in a terrible pucker as to what was the fate in store for him, he could not but remark the universal system of industry that prevailed on every side. There were long corridors leading to the justice-hall, and messengers and other officers kept their appointed stations, but not one was idle at his post. One and all were provided with their bundle of fine grass or hay, shredding it fine as possible with their jaws and feet, and carefully laying by the stuff when so prepared. Even the presence of a stranger and a prisoner could not for a moment distract them from their occupation, and more often than not the mouthful of work they were busy on so impeded their speech when they asked the formal question, "What affair is this?" that they were almost unintelligible.

At last the hall of justice was fairly reached. Regarding it with his ant's eyes it

appeared to Peter to be a very capacious chamber with a vaulted roof, and the walls tastefully ornamented in the mosaic style, with tiny squares of various-coloured earth highly varnished. At the further end of the hall was a convenient space railed off from the body by a row of neatly-polished wheat-stalks, and here sat the magistrate and his clerks, while on the other side were the ushers and other officials of the court.

And here again, to Peter's astonishment, was visible evidence of the ruling passion of these strange creatures. Every usher had his bundle of hay to pick, as had every messenger, as had a ferocious-looking ant, blind of an eye, that sat at the mouth of a gloomy cave at the further extremity of the hall, and was evidently the gaoler of the court. Nay, the magistrate's clerks within the sacred rail were hard at work on their bundles as prisoners condemned to pick oakum, and even the magistrate himself, though evidently enfeebled and troubled with a swelling in his left second leg that compelled him to rest it in the cleft of a forked stick, was hard at it too. When the officers had marched their prisoner up close to the rails, the ushers immediately came forward with numerous little parcels of the strange-looking grass, in order that the prosecutor and his witnesses might not be standing idle during the examination.

"What's the charge?" inquired the magistrate, desisting from hay-shredding and giving his attention to the making up of trusses, so that he might be at liberty to use his organs of speech.

"Laziness, please your worship," replied the prosecutor.

It was plain that his worship was considerably astonished. He was in the act of binding a truss—he had, indeed, made one turn with the hayband—but hearing the officer's answer his amazement caused him to loose his hold, and the hay was scattered all over the judicial seat. This was unlucky for Peter, since it naturally had a disastrous effect on his worship's temper.

"Officer," said he in a cool passion, "have you well considered the accusation you bring against this ant?"

"I have my witnesses, five of them, your honour, to substantiate the charge, which is nothing less than that the prisoner was discovered, not half-an-hour since, fast asleep on our queen's highway."

At this there was a suppressed murmur through the court, and the magistrate's chief clerk bit a straw short off instead of splitting it, in the extremity of his astonishment.

"Pray has he the use of his limbs?" asked the magistrate.

"He has the use of all his limbs, your honour."

"And of his eyes?"

"Likewise of his eyes. He is nothing less than a sound able-bodied ant, please your worship."

"What have you to say to this charge, prisoner?" exclaimed the magistrate, turning fiercely on Peter. "What have you to urge that the extreme penalty of the law shall not be enforced against you?"

Peter thought on the three ants' heads grinning above the gateway, and only that he had no shoes, there was nothing to prevent his heart sinking into them. He thought it better to out with the whole truth as far as he knew it.

"May it please your worship," said he, "what I have to urge will, I am sure, weigh favourably with so just a judge as yourself. The fact is, to the best of my knowledge, I have not been an ant for so long as a dozen hours yet, and can therefore be hardly expected to know much of your excellent laws and customs."

"How do you mean? How old is the prisoner, officer?" demanded the magistrate.

The officer without ceremony seized hold of Peter by the jaws and wrenched them open, and after attentively examining the interior pronounced the prisoner to be five months and a fortnight old.

"Begging your pardon, that is impossible," remarked Peter; "this time yesterday I was a snail."

There was an inclination towards tittering evinced by the auditory at this, and the chief clerk glared through the white bars angrily, but seeing no one who had for a moment rested from his work to laugh he let the matter pass.

"Let me advise you to mind what you are about, prisoner," exclaimed the clerk in a stern voice; "a court of justice is no place for tomfoolery."

"I assure your honour that I was never more in earnest than at the present moment," responded Peter solemnly.

"He must be out of his mind," remarked the magistrate, looking as though he could not credit the evidence of his ears.

"No, your worship, from my observation of his behaviour I should say that he was quite in his senses," replied the officer.

This was unlucky for the over-zealous policeman as it was lucky for Peter. What the worthy magistrate meant was not so much that the prisoner had shown symptoms of

insanity by going to sleep on the highway, as that he had betrayed it in his daring to make what certainly appeared like a jocular answer in justice's awful presence.

"Don't contradict me, sir," exclaimed the magistrate; "I say that he is mad, and that you are not much better, sir, if it comes to that. Let the prisoner speak for himself. Look at me, prisoner, and answer me truthfully. Are you or are you not in your proper senses?"

This seemed to Peter like an opportunity to get off, if not scot-free, at least with a lighter punishment than might otherwise fall to his lot.

"To speak the honest truth, your worship, I don't think that I am in my proper senses," replied he.

But alas! the warning against putting trust in princes holds good also in the case of magistrates—at least in the case of ant magistrates, as was shown in this instance. The officer who had volunteered testimony as to Peter's sanity was a very worthy fellow and one held in high esteem for the honesty of his opinion, and no sooner had the magistrate administered to him the snubbing above chronicled than he repented, and would have been glad to make amends if he might do so without damage to his dignity. Peter's answer furnished the desired opportunity.

"You think not, hey?" said he, with withering sarcasm in his tone. "Now there we don't agree. No mad ant could have given so shrewd and cunning a reply as you have. The officer was right, I find. Call your witnesses, officer."

The five witnesses were called, and clearly proved against the delinquent the heinous offence of being found asleep in working hours upon the queen's highway, on which the magistrate assumed a look of much gravity, and ordered every ant present to desist from work while he pronounced the necessarily severe sentence of the law. Peter was in a terrible condition of mind. His heart thumped hard against his ribs, and a dizziness overcame his vision, so that he could see nothing but those three ghostly heads at the archway. Already he had witnessed enough of the habits and customs of ants to convince him that nothing but the passing of a terrible sentence—the most terrible of all sentences, indeed—would induce them to forego for never so short a time their everlasting work. The terror of death was before his eyes, and down he sank on his six hairy knees to beg for mercy. Strange as it might appear, he averred, it was still strictly true that by some magic he had been changed from a snail to an ant, and did not know, indeed, that he was anything but a snail still until the labourers awoke him; "And when your honour



THE TRIAL—THE VERDICT—THE SENTENCE.



comes to consider how slow a creature the snail is, how he is burdened with his house on his back constantly, and cannot move a pace without it," continued Peter, "you will, I trust, make some allowance for my sluggishness, even after I was roused to a sense of the happy transformation. I'll work. I'm quite willing. Show me the job that any other ant can accomplish, and if I don't do it or sink under it you may take my head off and welcome. But don't cut me off in the prime of the new life I have just come into. It is too, too cruel!"

The magistrate's heart was touched, as were the hearts of all present, and there was heard throughout the court a husky sound as though the dust of the hay every one was preparing had got down his throat. There was a pause in the proceedings of considerable duration, during which the magistrate whispered with his clerk, who was so aged an ant that his moustaches were turning grey.

"You say that he is five months and a fortnight old," presently remarked the judge to the officer.

"That's his age to a day."

"And you, prisoner, say that you were born this morning?"

"Last night or this morning, please your honour."

"And that you are willing to work?"

"Try me, your honour!" And, eager for the trial, Peter rose from his knees, whereon the magistrate exchanged a meaning glance with his chief clerk.

"On condition that you show your willingness and ability to work, your life shall be spared," observed the judge; "bring in some clay."

Some one left the court, and in a few seconds returned, followed by two labouring ants bearing in the hollow of a split straw some brown earth.

"Knead that—knead it fine, because it is for plastering," remarked the magistrate.

Poor Peter put up his foreleg in a bewildered manner, and stroked his face with the tip of it.

"Will somebody be good enough to show me how to knead it?" said he.

"Somebody—everybody has got his own work to look after. Set about the work quick. You can't live if you won't work."

"It isn't that I won't—I can't," exclaimed Peter, with tears in his eyes. "Please somebody show me—I should soon get in the way of it, I know."

"P'raps since you can't do that kind of work, you can some other," spoke the magistrate; "take away the clay and give him some grass to shred."

So they removed the clay and brought him one of the little bundles of grass. Peter's eyes brightened hopefully. He had had some opportunity of observing how grass was shredded, and soon as the work was brought him he set to with a will. But he couldn't manage it at all. The bits of grass wouldn't split; they broke short off in his hands, and he otherwise made such a bungle as set the court in ecstasies of merriment.

"I cannot do the work, your honour, as you see," said Peter; "I've tried, and I can't; therefore you must take my life if you will."

"It is because you cannot do it that your life shall be spared," replied the worthy judge, benevolence beaming in his expressive eyes. "If you had been able to do the work soon as it was brought to you, you would have shown at once that your tale of being born last night only was false, or how could you have acquired that dexterity that is gained only by experience? Since, however, you have demonstrated beyond question that you are as ignorant of the way in which ants work as the merest infant, it is my duty to give you the benefit of the doubt that is raised in my mind. At the same time, however, you must abide by the law that governs us. We can accept no strangers amongst us as free workers; it is only those ants that are born and bred here that are entitled to that privilege. As a stranger you are a slave, and so you must remain as long as you are with us. Take him away to the slave workings, officer."

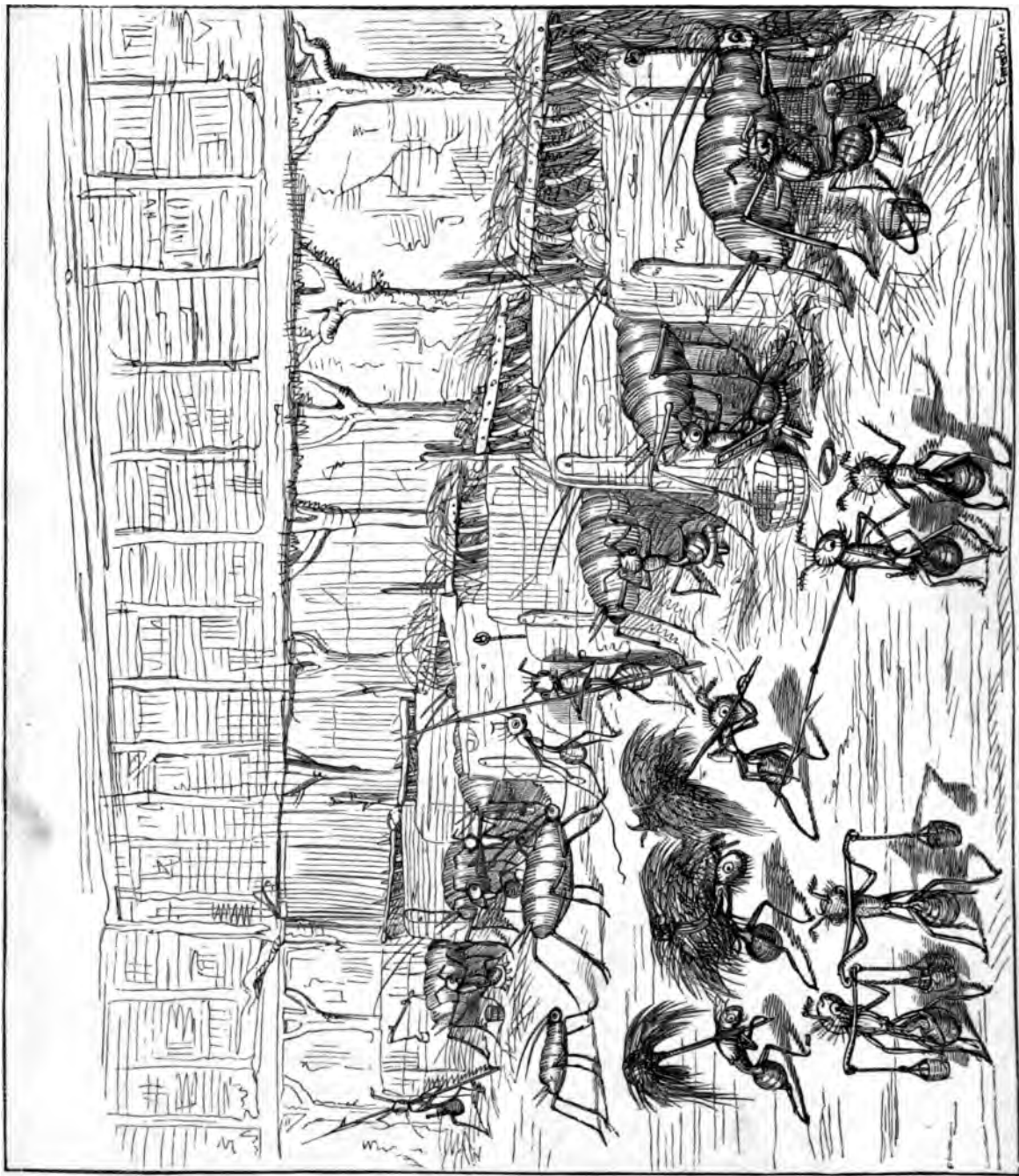
So ended Peter's trial, and with his joy at having his life spared sobered in some degree by the prospect of perpetual slavery, he bowed to his judge and followed his conductor. As the officer was leaving the justice-hall, however, he turned to the former and asked—

"What work shall he be set at, please your worship?"

"At work of the third degree," replied the ant-magistrate; "we can make no distinction. As a slave he must redeem his condition gradually and by his industry. Let him be set at tending and milking our cows."

As may easily be imagined, Peter was not a little amazed to hear these words. "Tend and milk the cows!" thought he as he followed the officer through several dingy and winding avenues, "surely that must be a mistake. What have ants to do with cows or with milk? However, if it is not a mistake, it is all right, that is one consolation. I never tried milking a cow, but I've seen it done, and I know that it is not very hard work, and that it is counted wholesome employment. Besides, there is no fear of a fellow going hungry while he has cows to milk."

But Peter was doomed to a great disappointment. As before mentioned, whatever



PETER FINDS EMPLOYMENT AS A GREEN COW KEEPER.

shape he was permitted to assume, he always retained a certain amount of human intelligence—indeed, it was on this circumstance that the scheme of his purgatory hinged. Had he been endowed merely with the instincts and sensibilities of a beetle, a bluebottle, or an ant, his sensations under varying phases would have been no more than natural to him, and he would never have been purged to repentance for the cruelties he had inflicted on small things during his human existence. His possession of the power of human reasoning, however, occasionally led him into error, as it did on the present occasion. He had never heard of any other kind of cows but such as had four legs and a tail and horns, and he could conceive no other. Had he been an industrious and painstaking boy at school, and given proper attention to the entertaining and instructive lessons in natural history provided him by his kind schoolmaster, he would have learnt amongst other things something of the history of the ant. He would have been enlightened as to the fact that ants are not so destitute of creature comforts as is commonly imagined; that a frugal meal of dried corn is not all that they have to encourage and sustain them in their self-imposed arduous employment. They have nectar as well as bread. Almost everywhere where green things grow are to be found numerous creatures less than the ant that are known as *aphides*, and that live by sucking the sweet juices of growing plants. They browse on the leaves, in fact, as ordinary cows browse on pasture land. They are not pretty-looking creatures to the human eye, nor, according to the same short-sighted organ, is their existence considered desirable, since their gathering and multiplying means the total destruction of the plants they feed on.

This is, however, a view of the question that an ant can scarcely be expected to take, since the aphid is his cow, the creature that yields him the delicious liquor known as honeydew. It has long been commonly known to naturalists and readers at large that the ant is accustomed to take the aphid prisoner and convey him to his home as a captive, but for Peter was left the high privilege of observing the working of an aphid dairy regularly planned and arranged in an ant town.

The privilege in question, however, coming suddenly on him, did not overwhelm him with its advantages in a visual sense. Turning out of a lane, Peter and his conductor came presently on a spectacle astonishing as it was novel. There, laid out before him, and extending an immense distance, were hundreds of compartments, or “stalls,” as perhaps they should be called, each one tenanted by a strange-looking creature, short in the legs, with a bulky greenish-coloured body, and a black head. Compared with the ants in

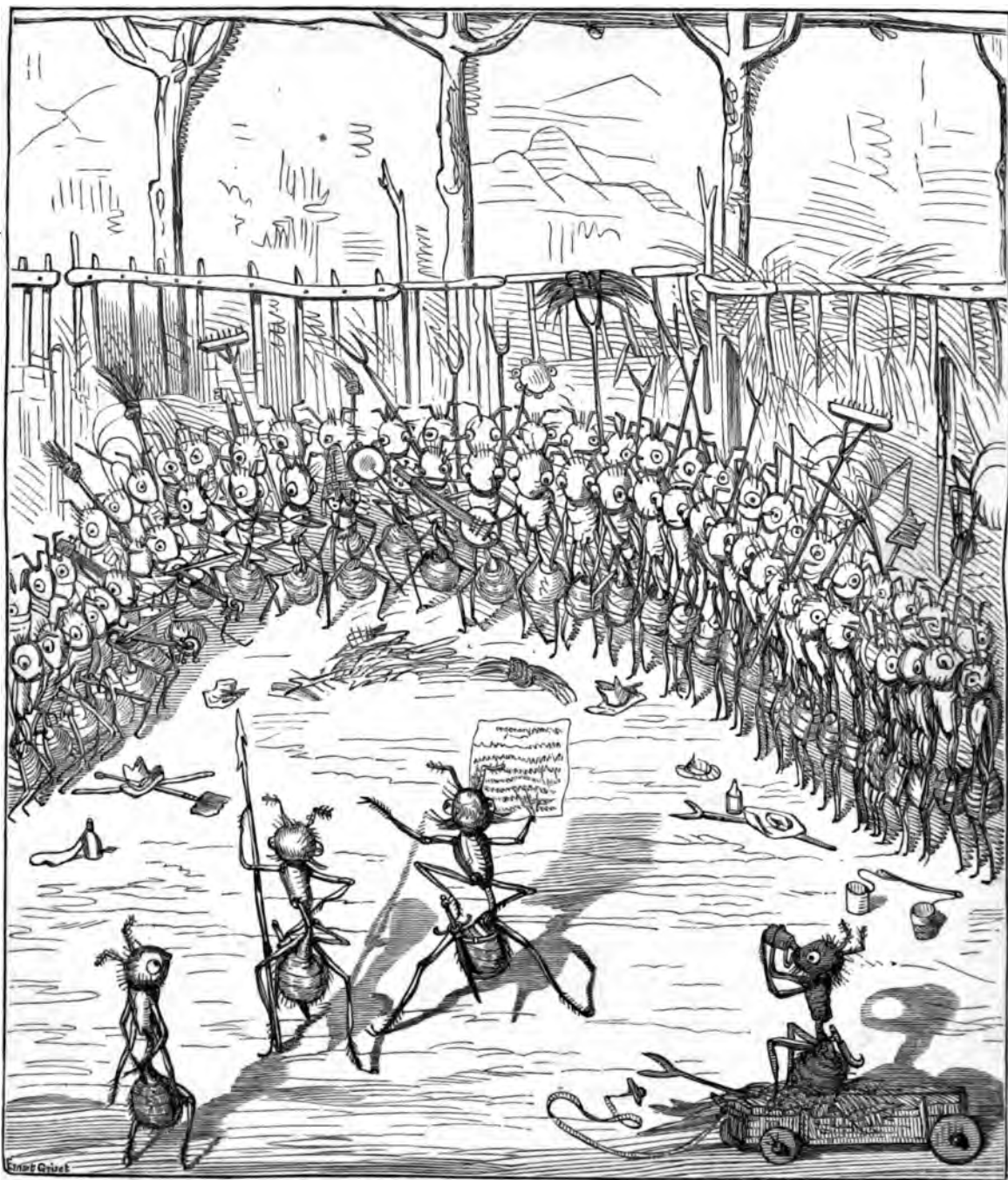
attendance on them, they were in size what a calf is to a cow. On the upper part of their bodies were long hairs, but underneath they were quite smooth, and each carried two teats.

Never, however, in the whole course of Peter's human career had he seen on a dairy farm anything to equal the cleanliness, the neatness, and order such as was here observable on every side. There were no evil smells, no waste, no litter. Every stall, with its neatly-plastered partitions, was glazed with a fine greyish sand, that, contrasting with the pale-green bodies of the "cows," had a very pretty appearance: To every stall was an ant in attendance, and over every three stalls a soldier-ant kept guard, marching to and fro. Now Peter discovered what the mysterious shredding of grass meant; it was food to tempt the delicate appetites of the green cows. At the head of every stall there was a bundle of it, and in many cases the cows were munching it in great contentment.

Many of the slave-ants were busy milking. They did not perform the operation, however, according to the human method. It was plain at a glance to Peter that a system of persuasion was that which ruled. The milkers did not pull at the teats of the green cows. Placing a convenient vessel beneath the animal that, by certain manifestations well known to the ant, evinced an inclination to be operated on, the milker, approaching it gently, and with a humming noise droning and soothing, such as may be heard amongst Irish dairymaids while at work in a similar manner, commenced to subject the mite of a green cow to a series of coaxings and ticklings, patting it on the neck, scratching its forehead, and touching it gingerly under the left and right shoulder-blades. The result was invariable. Within what appeared to be as long as about two minutes, the honey-dew began to flow—a fact that the milker at once announced to the soldier on guard by a quick short cry, whereat the soldier at once came up and looked on with a business-like air until the milking was completed, when a couple of particularly clean-looking ants made their appearance, and between them bore off the vessel.

After the milk-pail, as it may be termed, was taken away—at the very instant of its removal—a lingering tiny drop of the precious liquid fell from the green cow's teat to the ground, and quick as lightning the milker darted forward and gobbled it up at the expense of taking a mouthful of the earth with which the stall was strewn, afterwards smacking his lips and making a face as though he had experienced a rare treat, while the soldier on guard laughed grimly, and, as Peter thought, somewhat enviously.

"You're in luck this milking, my friend," he remarked to the ant.



THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HARANGUES HIS TROOPS.

"It's time I was," returned the milker gruffly; "I hadn't tasted a drop before for over a month. An ant had better be dead than tantalised so. I wish that I was dead very often."

"Well, well, never mind," returned the soldier good-naturedly; "you have only another quarter to serve, and you will be taken away from the temptation and put to brick-making."

The strangeness of this remark caused Peter to turn involuntarily to the officer of the guard who had conducted him to the cow-house for some kind of explanation, and just as he did so the officer, motioning him to be silent, cried out in a loud voice—

"The law! the law! the law! Come and hear it."

Whereon the milkers as far as Peter could see turned out of the cow-stalls and came trooping up the centre avenue, and there stood in a semicircle to the number of four hundred or more. And now Peter observed that these milker ants differed considerably in appearance from the others. Instead of being of a ruddy brown they were jet black, and their heads were bigger and their limbs heavier and coarser-looking. Moreover, it was impossible, in gazing on the dingy multitude, to overlook the fact that they were not of that cheerful aspect that distinguished the brown ants, but morose and surly-looking, as though their lives, instead of affording them enjoyment, was a cruel burden to them. While in human life Peter had more than once witnessed gangs of convicts at work at the government depôts, and he was at once struck by the similarity that existed between their hang-dog countenances and those of the black milker ants.

"Attention!" cried the officer. "The law of yesterday is the law of to-day, but that you may not forget it, and thereby incur the severest penalties, once again, as yesterday, hear what is the law that governs slave milkers.

"That no milker so much as touch the outside of a honey-dew-pot with any part of his body during the process of milking, on pain of a beating and a fast of three days.

"That no milker touch the teat of an aphid, or any part of him below his hind-ribs, on pain of solitary confinement for the space of a month and the loss of one eye.

"That any milker detected in the act of stealing honey-dew either from the pot or from the teat of an aphid shall suffer instant death.

"Long live the Queen!"

After this brief address, the milkers were dismissed to their posts, scowling more

discontentedly than ever—all except one, who appeared to be a sort of foreman, and whom the officer called to him.

“You have heard the rules?” the officer remarked to Peter.

“I have heard them, but I must make bold to say that I don’t understand them the least in the world, your honour,” replied Peter humbly.

“That’s no affair of mine,” returned the officer shortly; “my business is to lay down the law; yours is to obey at your peril. There is a stall vacant, I suppose?”

“Yes, captain,” the foreman milker answered cringingly; “we want a milker in place of the rogue that was torn limb from limb this morning.”

“Show this slave to his work, then.”

And so saying, the officer turned on his heel and marched off.

“Come along with me,” exclaimed the foreman milker, giving Peter a brutal shove that for a moment set the tiny spark of human feeling within him in a blaze. However, he conquered his indignation, and meekly followed at the other’s bidding. Presently they came to a stall where stood an aphis unattended.

“Here’s your work,” exclaimed the foreman. “D’ye know your business?”

“What is my business?”

The foreman, turning about with his savage eyes gleaming (he was a tremendously big fellow), caught Peter’s nose in his jaws, and gave it a tweak that caused him to cry out with anguish.

“You’ve got to say ‘sir’ when you speak to me,” said the hideous giant, following up the nose-tweaking with a kick that sent Peter reeling.

“What is my business, if you please, sir?” asked the poor victim with all humility.

“To do as you see the other slaves doing,” replied the nigger-driver, somewhat mollified by Peter’s submissive tone. “You must sit down in the corner there and split hay for your cow, at the same time keeping a sharp look-out for milking-time.”

“But how shall I know when is milking-time, if I may take the liberty of inquiring, sir? Pity my ignorance, if you please; I never was engaged in this kind of work before, or saw it performed.”

“Then you won’t be at it long,” replied the brutal driver, grinning maliciously; “you will be sure to be putting your foot in it, and then ’ware hawk. You heard me say just now what was the fate of the ant whose situation you take?” However, he condescended, after he had made this encouraging remark, to instruct Peter as to the signs by which he

might know when the green cow required milking. "You will observe it wag its tail with an up-and-down movement, after which it will wink three times with its left eye," said the foreman, "and mind that you count the winks, or you may find yourself in a pretty mess."

"Does she wink less than three times on occasions, sir, may I venture to inquire?" asked Peter.

"It is lucky that you asked the question," the foreman replied (he grew wonderfully gracious now that Peter addressed him in so meek and modest a manner); "you must bear in mind that she winks once when she is in want of water to drink, twice when she has a fancy for a feed of hay, and three times when she desires to be milked; and now get to your corner, where, as you see, is plenty of provender for picking, and set about your work without asking any more questions."

It was the greatest wonder that Peter the ant recollected half of the directions the foreman had given him, he was all along in such a maze of bewilderment. What chiefly astonished him and stood foremost in his mind were the rules that regulated the dairy as declared by the officer. What need was there for such stringent regulations about so simple a matter? As far as might be judged from their appearance, the milkers and green cow tenders were well fed and in plump condition, and if no more was expected of a milker and cow-keeper than that he should keep his animal in proper order, and refrain from stealing the milk, the office could not be a hard one. "There is no fear that *I* shall be tempted by the queer-looking stuff," said Peter to himself, thinking of the honey-dew, which was gold-colour and of the consistency of thin treacle; "the difficulty would be to compel me to eat some of it rather than abstain from it."

But he had to work as well as think, for the soldier on guard had his eye on him, and, armed as he was with a tiny blade of dried spear grass, now and then, as Peter, lost in thought, ceased his job of hay-picking, uttered an impatient grunt, and fiercely twiddled his moustache with his fore-feeler. It was not an easy task that expected of him after all, as Peter presently discovered. For fear that his cow might any instant wink a command, he dare not trust his eyes from hers, and hers were such dull, sleepy-looking eyes, and blinked and winked so lazily, that, tired as Peter was, he could scarcely refrain from gaping, and of all things would have liked to tuck his legs under him on the soft hay and indulge in just forty winks.

It was fortunate that he did not, for presently the green cow, raising its sleepy-looking

head, turned it towards Peter's corner and winked twice in the most unmistakable manner. "That's for hay, if I am not mistaken," thought he, jumping up with alacrity, and, eager to win the good opinion of the green cow, as well as that of his employers, he carried in his arms a bundle of the sweet-smelling, newly-picked hay and laid it just under the animal's nose.

And here occurred a misfortune that, had not the sentry been close at hand, might at once have caused the termination of Peter's career in a very abrupt and unpleasant manner. As before stated, his want of skill as a grass-shredder had caused considerable amusement to the magistrate's court, and, fully aware of it, he had taken all the care he could to do better; but what with troubling his head with those queer laws the officer had promulgated, and gazing on the sleepy eyes of his charge, he once or twice made a slip, and allowed to pass a broader piece of hay than he should. This carelessness at once made itself manifest soon as the green cow began to feed. All of a sudden, to Peter's amazement, its tail, or that part of its body that represented that appendage, began to vibrate in the strangest and most eccentric manner, and its eyeballs to protrude so that it could not have winked to save its life. Peter was terribly frightened.

"If you please, sir," said he, hurrying up to the sentry, who at the time was gossiping with the soldier on guard at the next stall—"if you please, sir, would you be good enough to come and look at my cow? it don't seem well."

And indeed it did not. During the momentary absence of its keeper an alarming change had come over the poor animal. Its green body had changed to ash-colour, its knees trembled, and its tail was rising and falling with the velocity of a steam-hammer, while it emitted a gasping sound and shook its head in token of some violent dislike. The soldier saw what ailed it in an instant.

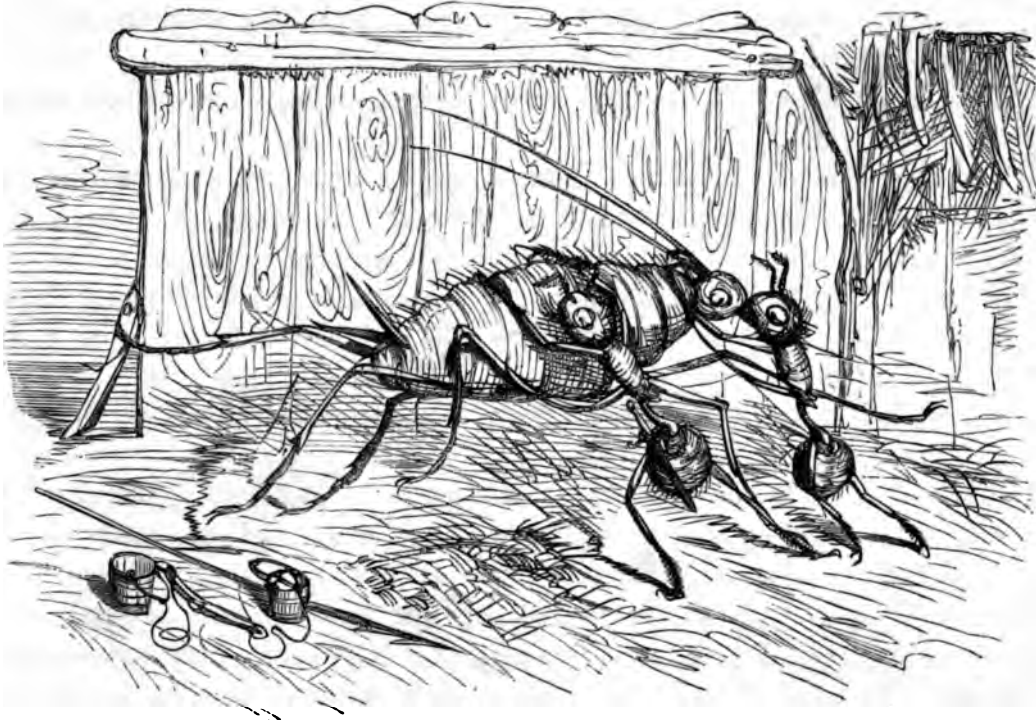
"You blundering blockhead!" he cried, "the cow is choking! You have neglected to shred its food fine enough, and a bit has stuck in its throat."

And straightway he threw away his spear, and began to pat the green cow on the back with all his might, while Peter, in agony for the possible consequences of his indiscretion, coaxed the cow and caressed it, and implored it to make an effort and spit out what incommoded it, and yielding either to the moral persuasion or the physical, the green cow presently obligingly complied, though not without betraying evidences of extreme exhaustion.

"The foreman must know of this," observed the soldier, recovering his spear and

speaking in severest tones. "This is a case for the magistrate. Think yourself lucky if you get off with the loss of an eye, my friend."

But here, for the twentieth time, Peter's good fortune stepped in to his rescue. It was not milking-time with the aphis, it seemed, by several hours; but what with its confusion consequent on the semi-choking, and the patting of the soldier and the coaxing of



PETER AND THE SENTRY RECOVERING THE GREEN COW FROM ITS SEMI-STRANGULATION.

Peter, it so far forgot itself as to yield some considerable quantity of honey-dew. The soldier saw it and regarded it with gloating eyes. Then he stepped softly out of the stall and glanced down the avenue where the foreman's shed was; then he came back to the stall again.

"Hist!" said he in a whisper, and motioning the cow-keeper to bow his head and listen, "when I just now said that you would be lucky to escape with no more severe punishment than the loss of one of your eyes, I was forgetting the enormity of your offence."

"You don't mean that, sir," replied Peter in a fright; "surely they will spare me *one* of my eyes! It was an accident, indeed it was. I——"

"Not only will they take your eyes, but your life as well," interrupted the wily soldier. "You're a dead ant, certain as I open my mouth."

"But are you obliged to open your mouth, sir? Ah! if you only knew what I have already suffered I am sure you would take compassion on me."

"I will on one condition," replied the soldier, once more looking round carefully to see that nobody overheard him.

"Name it! oh, name it!" exclaimed Peter, ready to embrace the soldier's knees in his gratitude.

"You must allow me to lick up this nectar and not say a word about it," the sentry softly whispered, pointing as he spoke to the honey-dew on the ground. "Say yes, and not only will I screen you, but you shall have just the least taste for your pains."

"Is that all?" returned Peter, in wondering delight at being permitted to escape on such easy terms. "Take it all, soldier, take every drop of it, and if I say a word about it I hope it may be the last word I shall speak."

"Nay," returned the corrupt soldier, falling on the precious honey-dew at once, "you shall have a taste, for you are a good fellow."

It was indeed but a taste that the ant left for Peter—no more indeed than a tiny speck; but so far from regretting the other's greediness he was glad of it, making sure that however well the queer-looking stuff might suit the taste of an ant bred and born, it certainly would be no treat for him; indeed, only that he was fearful of giving offence, Peter would have insisted on the soldier eating it all. For civility's sake, however, he just put his lips to the smear of honey-dew, and instantly he was made to understand the whole mystery of the dairy and its slave working. To say that the dew was delicious is to do it as scant justice as to say that the diamond is brighter than a metal button, or that the sun's beams are superior to those of a rushlight. It was not so much a taste in the mouth as a sensation pervading the entire frame that the honey-dew conferred—an electricity composed of every exquisite flavour a thousand times refined. However, since Peter himself would have found it quite impossible to have described the sensation it afforded him, it would be the height of presumption in me to attempt it.

Now he comprehended why slaves were set at the labour of cow tending and milking. The temptation to taste of the ambrosia was of such an urgent and tormenting character

that it was deemed unjust and impolitic to intrust the care and tending of the creature yielding it to free and independent members of the community, with natural tastes to gratify and desires to appease. It was different with the slaves. Their masters, the brown ants, acquiring a right to their services according to the laws of battle, were at liberty to employ them in any manner they chose, and to exact conditions of them which, however repugnant to their inclinations, they had forfeited the right to protest against. "And that makes it so much the harder for me," mused Peter, as he retired to his corner to pick hay, while the unfaithful guard, with the odour of stolen honey-dew still lingering about his moustache, marched to and fro as though he were the most upright and vigilant sentinel in the colony. "If I was a prisoner taken in war, or if I had been a desperate criminal worthy of terrible punishment, it would not have been so bad; but what business has any one to tempt me with a bait and call it a crime if I bite at it? This is what they" (the owners of the tiny voices he meant, though he didn't have the courage to say so) "call giving a fellow a chance! It is lucky that I have a better friend than either of them" (this time he alluded to the dishonest sentry). "I am very lucky to meet with such a good fellow. I never could, in any state of life I ever lived in yet, deny myself any gratification within reach, and I have not the least doubt but that under ordinary circumstances my fate would have been that of my predecessor. I shall be all right now, however. We can go shares in as much as may be cribbed of the glorious stuff, and nobody a bit the wiser."

But in this he was mistaken, as it was very proper that he should be, although at the same time that was no excuse for the mean and paltry behaviour of the sentinel. Come milking-time Peter acquitted himself very well, though the foreman remarked on the small quantity of dew yielded, as well as on the rough and unhealthy appearance of the green cow's coat.

"Are you sure that you gave her water enough when she winked for it?" the foreman inquired of Peter.

"Quite sure," replied Peter; "ask the sentry."

But that impostor pretended to be in a mighty huff at the suggestion. "How dare you take the liberty of bringing my name in question?" said he, regarding Peter with martial ferocity, at the same time handling his spear as though of a great mind to lay it across the delinquent's back. "Know that you are a slave, and unworthy to so much as look on a free ant—a civilian even, let alone an ant of the grand army."

Peter had it in his mind to expose the cheat on the spot, but luckily bethought him of

how useless it would be. His word would not be taken, and in all probability he would be severely punished for the assumed slander. Therefore he held his peace, thinking to talk the matter over with the soldier when the foreman was gone.

And so he did, and the soldier treated it as a joke, assuring Peter that he had only taken such airs for the sake of appearances, and that he wouldn't have prodded him with his spear for the world.

"We'll drink to our eternal friendship in the very next taste of dew you can contrive to filch for us," said the sentry, "and now that he" (the foreman) "has gone I will put you up to a dodge by which we may get a drop on the sly and no one the wiser."

"Pray, sir," inquired Peter, "are you the soldier that kept sentry here when the last milker was condemned to be torn limb from limb?"

For a moment the soldier appeared disconcerted by the question, but he speedily recovered.

"To be sure I was," he replied, "and I may tell you that of all fools it was ever my misfortune to have dealings with, I think that that ant was the biggest. If he had taken my advice he might have been alive and sitting in that very corner you occupy now."

"And what might have been the advice that you gave him, sir?" inquired Peter, who was not more than half convinced of the honesty of his companion.

"Well, you see, it came about in this way," replied the sentry. "We used to understand each other, as I trust you and I shall; but he couldn't control his greediness, and had the impudence to expect a drop of dew each time that he procured me a refresher. I warned him how it would end. 'You had best rely on me,' I used to tell him, 'and take my word, as I look out, when it will be safe for you to take a nip.' But it was all of no use. He was caught at it at last. I myself was compelled to catch him, as he grew so audacious, and the consequence was that he suffered, and they stuck his head over the gateway."

"Ah!" exclaimed Peter, with a shudder, "I think that I saw it as they were bringing me in at the gateway. But what is the dodge you were speaking of, sir?"

"I will show you by-and-by," replied the sentry; "all that you've got to bear in mind is that when the cow winks three times for milking you must not give the signal to the foreman at once, but first whisper it to me, and then you will see what will happen."

Peter did so. After five or six hours the green cow winked its eyes thrice, and rising from his hay-picking its keeper signified the same in a whisper to the expectant sentry.

"Milking-time," said Peter.

"All right. I mustn't be seen in the stall, you understand," the soldier whispered back from behind his fore-paw. "Just you take my spear, and milk me a drop on to the blade of it, and pass it me back again from behind, and afterwards, if there is a chance, it will be your turn."

So Peter took the spear which the artful soldier handed to him, with his back to the stall, and, after patting and coaxing the innocent aphid to a fit condition, got the dew on the blade of the weapon and delivered it to the sentry, who, under pretence of shouldering arms, brought the precious drop past his lips and licked it off in a twinkling.

"Now may I have a drop?" whispered Peter, who, having once more handled and smelt the wonderful dew, was trembling with excitement for a taste of it. "May I have a drop—just a little drop now, sir?"

"Hist! the foreman is coming," returned the sentinel hurriedly; "he is peeping out of his shed now. Give the milking signal."

Peter did as requested, and the foreman came.

"Why didn't you call before?" exclaimed he in a rage. "The dew has been running to waste!"

"I called as soon as I saw the cow wink, sir," answered the mendacious milker.

"As soon as you *saw* it, no doubt. You have been asleep, you idle ruffian! Soldier, give him ten stripes with the shaft of your spear!"

And, apparently nothing loath, the treacherous sentry approached his confederate, and bidding him kneel down, administered ten strokes across the small of his back with hearty will.

"What an unlucky fellow you are!" remarked the soldier, when the foreman and the milk-carriers had taken their departure. "You are always getting into trouble somehow!"

"Somehow! You know how well enough," replied Peter indignantly. "It was all your fault, you know that very well."

"Was it my fault that the foreman happened to be coming out of his shed just at the wrong time?"

"Anyhow, you needn't have hit so hard," remarked Peter, rubbing his shoulders.

"You are growing just like that stupid ant whose place you took, and who was torn limb from limb; he used to be fond of arguments and making observations when he should

have held his tongue," replied the soldier reproachfully. "We shall never get on if you don't trust entirely to me."

"Do you wish me to give you notice of next milking-time?" Peter asked.

"I wish you to give me notice of all milking-times. How am I to keep up my strength if I don't get more than my rations?" answered the rascal with a grin. "You don't imagine that such vigour as I just now was compelled to exercise on you is kept up on half a barleycorn a day, do you?"

It was now apparent to the wretched Peter that he had fallen into very bad company, and he bitterly regretted his want of courage in not informing the sentry when first he hinted his nefarious design that he was an honest ant who could take a share in no such dealings, and if they were suggested to him again he should inform the superior authorities. "The worst that could have happened would have been my death," mused he sorrowfully, his tears moistening the hay he was engaged in shredding and rendering it all the tougher, "but it would have been an honest and honourable death; but now what have I to look forward to? This rascal will use me as his scapegoat as long as it suits him, and then he will betray me as he did the last poor fellow."

And for a while he was very penitent and full of good resolves; but presently came round the waiters, bringing the slave milkers their supper of black bread, having eaten which they were ordered to lie down for a few hours' sleep.

They were very few. Indeed, it seemed to Peter that he had barely closed his eyes when he felt a cruel poke in his side, and, starting up, there he found the sentry rousing him with the butt of his spear.

"Wake up, wake up, sleepyhead!" said the soldier, who was no more honestly inclined to-day than yesterday. "I'm dying for a drop of dew; get up and coax the old cow out of a drop for me."

Now the evening before, Peter had quite made up his mind that the next time the soldier made such a demand he would up and tell him what he thought of him, chancing what might ensue; but roused from his sleep before he desired it, he was very savage and discontented, and rather inclined than otherwise to side with any one that would put a trick on the authorities that had confined him in such a miserable hole. However, he hesitated just a little.

"Do you know what you'll get for breakfast?" pursued the tempter.

"What shall I get?" asked Peter.

"Same as you had for supper last night, but only half the quantity, and not a bit more till supper comes again."

As plain as could be, something whispered into the ear of Peter the ant at this moment, "Don't believe him; he's a cheat and impostor who will one day meet his deserts. Shut your ears to what he says, and do as you know that you ought." There was no mistaking the voice, for it was in its sadness and sweetness different from any that Peter had ever before heard—the voice that had pleaded in his favour as he lay a crushed and bruised snail amidst the dust of the hollow tree; but, as before mentioned, the shocking young fellow in ant shape was obstinate and reckless, and would take no heed of the warning voice.

"If you have a drop I must have a drop as well," said he to the soldier.

"That's only fair, so that I have first drop. Make haste—you coax the cow while I look out."

So Peter coaxed the green cow in the manner before related, so as to make it believe that if it was not milking-time it should be, and holding the blade of the sentry's spear under the animal's teat, as on the previous occasion, obtained a draught of honey-dew, and gave it to the other, who again received it back-handed and conveyed it artfully to his mouth.

"Just another drop," said he, smacking his lips, "and then you may have as much as you like, and I won't tell of you."

So Peter gave him the produce of the other teat, which, with a repetition of the manoeuvre already described, he licked up with a like relish.

"Now look out while I get a drop, if you please," whispered the fraudulent milker.

"I wouldn't if I were you," returned the soldier coolly; "if you take any more there will be none forthcoming at milking-time, and then there will be a pretty rumpus, I can tell you."

"Then why did you take the second drop?" remarked Peter indignantly.

"Why did you persuade me?" rejoined the soldier, grinning in the deluded milker's face. "You are growing more and more like that vagabond who was torn limb from limb yesterday. It's my belief that it was your intention to make me intoxicated, so that you might effect your escape. However, I won't tell of you if you get on with your work and say no more about it."

There was no use in replying to such a cold-blooded cheat, so trembling with rage

till he could scarcely hold a bit of hay still while he split it, Peter went on with his work, feeling the more thirsty for being balked of his expected taste of the delicious dew.

By-and-by Peter heard on every side the peculiar shrill cries that the other cow-keepers were uttering to call the foreman's attention to the fact that their charges required the attention of the milk-carriers, but to his alarm his cow made no sort of sign. "Perhaps it has gone to sleep and forgotten its duty," thought Peter, so approaching the cow he gently tickled her nose with a straw, on which the docile animal opened its left eye and winked once—twice—and no more, while its tail, hanging perfectly placid, convinced the unlucky ant that his cow required to be fed only. So, trembling with apprehension, he put some grass down before her and awaited the result.

He had not long to wait. Up came the foreman at a trot, bringing with him a couple of carriers.

"How's this?" he exclaimed wrathfully; "why didn't you cry out as you must have heard the others doing?"

"If you please, sir," Peter humbly replied, "I understood that I wasn't to call out till my cow winked three times."

"And d'ye mean to tell me that she *hasn't* winked three times?" said the foreman, his goggle eyes flashing suspiciously.

"Yes, sir, she has winked but twice—of that I am certain," replied the guilty Peter, at the same time casting an imploring look towards the sentry, who, however, turned his head away, and pretended to see something vastly interesting going on at the further extremity of the cow-shed.

"And can you give us no explanation *why* she didn't wink the other once?" inquired the foreman.

Peter, trembling in every limb, was silent.

"If you please, sir"—here put in the treacherous sentry—"maybe *I* can throw a light on the matter."

"To be sure you can—that's a good fellow," exclaimed Peter, feeling mighty grateful to the generous soldier.

"It was merely a suspicion, but what has since transpired advances it to undoubted fact, I am afraid," the villain continued. "Not ten minutes since, while my back was for an instant turned, I thought I heard a noise as of smacking of lips, and I at once called out, 'What's that?' 'It was a noise I made to frighten away a fly that had settled on her left

ear,' the slave answered. I have no doubt that the sound I heard was of him robbing the cow of her dew."

"See!" exclaimed one of the carriers, "any one may know that she has been recently milked—her dugs are quite wet now!"

Peter at once fell down on his six knees.

"Since it has come to this," he exclaimed, "since I must suffer, you shall know how little or how much I am to blame. This soldier here——"

But before he could utter another word, the soldier, with a wicked oath, flew at him, and endeavoured to beat him across the mouth with the flat of his spear, by way, no doubt, of preventing a further exposure of his rascality; but Peter foresaw the design, and in desperation at the identical moment pulled one of the carriers before him, and the blow descended fair on the proboscis of the former.

And here once again was manifested a wonderful instance of the protecting influence of the invisible beings that had charge of Peter's purgatory. Under ordinary circumstances it would not be difficult to surmise what would have been the result of the unintentional blow administered by the soldier to the unoffending honey-dew carrier. Peter would have been regarded as the malicious cause of it, and his handing over to the untender mercies of the law would only have been hastened, and he might have been condemned and executed without an opportunity of revealing the true state of the case; but it was otherwise ordained. Although it was easy enough to perceive by the flashing of the milk-carrier's eyes that his first feeling was one of rage and resentment against the cause of his assault, that disagreeable expression of countenance immediately subsided to give place to one that, though inexplicable, was certainly more pleasant to contemplate. The dew-carrier caught at his breath, and his eyes turned upward blissfully.

"Delicious!" he murmured.

"What! to have your nose flattened? You're a fool and nothing better!" exclaimed the wrathful foreman, and as he spoke he seized Peter by the scruff of the neck and held him fast.

"No, no! not to have your nose flattened—to smell the delightful perfume. Ah! there's nothing so lovely in the world!"

"As lovely as what, you idiot?"

"As honey-dew," and as he spoke the infatuated carrier applied the tip of his fore-foot to his proboscis, and then daintily licked it.

"I verily believe, soldier, that you've disturbed the fool's brain, and that he doesn't know what he is babbling about," remarked the foreman.

"Serve him right—he shouldn't have got in my way," replied the sentry, glaring over the unlucky carrier's shoulder at Peter, still on his knees.

"Ah, you don't understand me! The honey-dew on the blade of his spear! Oh, who would object to being beat to death with the flat of a spear that had been steeped in honey-dew?"

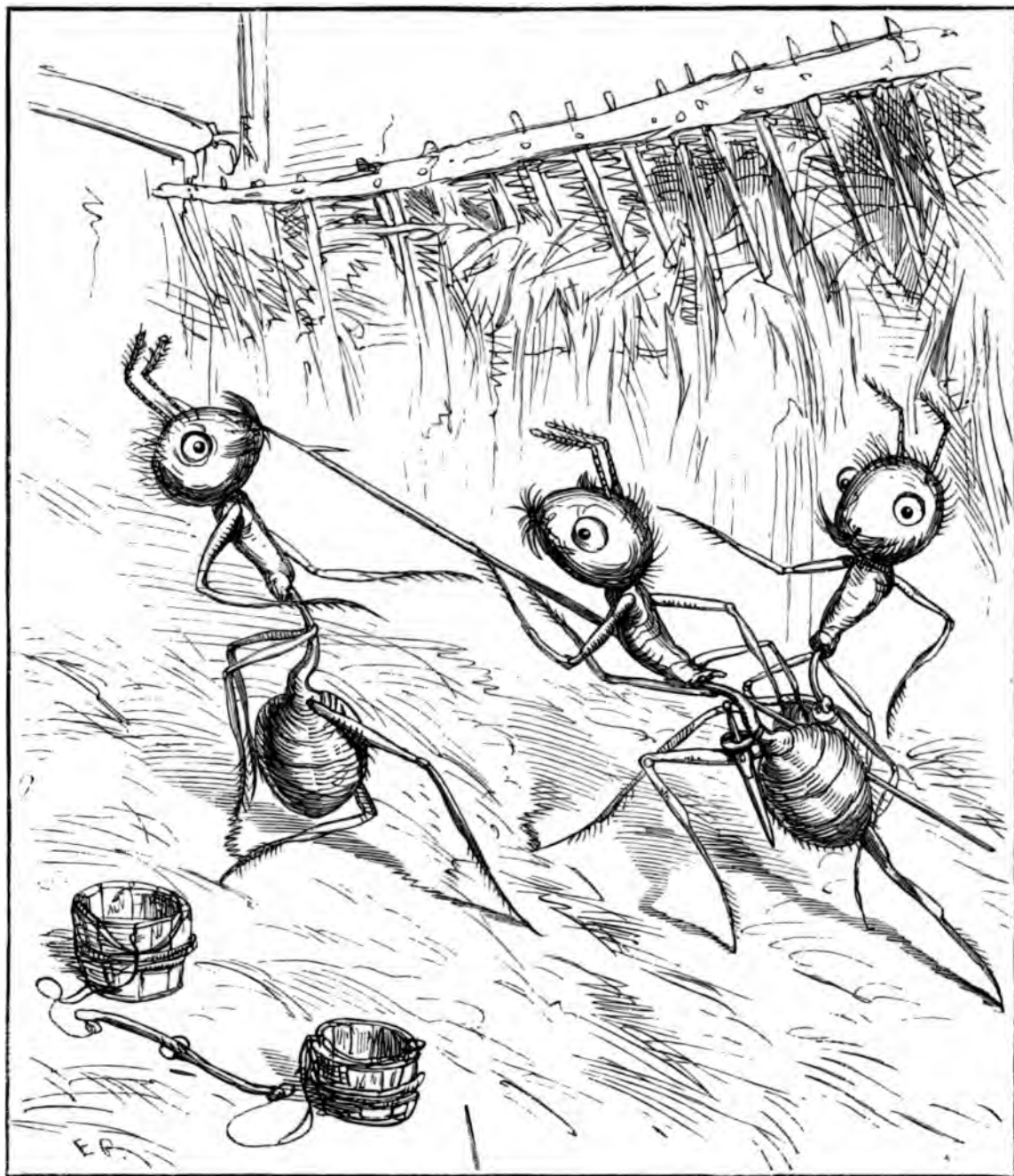
Hearing this the treacherous soldier hastily withdrew the weapon he had hitherto held advanced, in hopes of presently being able to get another crack at Peter, and placing it behind him endeavoured to plunge its blade into the yielding loam with which the green cow's stall was strewn. But the foreman detected the manœuvre, and darting forward plucked the spear out of the soldier's grasp.

"Ah!" said he suspiciously, "does the wind blow from *that* quarter? Now I recollect, Mr. Sentry, you stopped the mouth of the last slave that was on duty here by knocking his teeth down his throat as soon as he began to reply to your accusations!"

And with that the foreman applied the spear-blade to his nose, and took a long sniff at it. So far he appeared to be satisfied; but, to make quite sure, he next placed the point of the weapon in his mouth to taste it. This was the moment selected by the detected sentry to gratify his brutal vengeance. Right well he knew that the detection of his guilt was of itself sufficient warrant for his public execution, and that no crime he could now commit would cost him an extra pang; therefore, when he saw the top of the spear-blade in the overseer's mouth, with a brutal expression he made a dash forward, and to a certainty would have pushed at the spear-handle and transfixed the unlucky overseer through the gullet, had not Peter, actuated by his sailor instinct, nimbly skipped forward, and tripping up the heels of the would-be assassin, laid him on his back in a twinkling. It was a miraculous escape for the overseer, for the soldier had succeeded in touching the haft of the weapon, so that the victim's tongue was pricked and bleeding, and his screams for the guard were appalling. Peter meanwhile, excited to twice his ordinary strength, pinned the recreant by the throat, and so kept him on the ground.

It was impossible for any case to be clearer when Peter, conducted with the culprit before the sitting magistrate, detailed the artful manœuvring of the former.

"As for you, witness," said his worship in passing sentence (for since the soldier's offence was a civil one, it was not a matter for court-martial, although his counsel endea-



RECKLESS ONSLAUGHT OF THE RUSSIAN SENTINEL.

voured to make out to the contrary), "your behaviour, although somewhat atoned for by your subsequent heroic conduct, still calls for an expression of strong reprobation on the part of this court. Your duty was at once to have exposed this soldier's infamy, regardless of what you conceived to be the amount of danger attending the act. Had you done this, in all probability your reward would have been immediate emancipation from your present condition of slavery. Since, however, you have been so foolish as to let that opportunity pass you, you must be content to remain some short time longer a slave; but as a recognition of your bravery in saving the life of the overseer, you are permitted to choose whether the remainder of your servitude shall be of a civil or military character. These are times of war, and a young, active, and vigorous ant such as you have shown yourself to be should win his way to glory in an amazingly short time. What do you say?"

"I shall be delighted, your honour," replied Peter promptly.

"I beg your honour's pardon," observed a recruiting-sergeant who happened to be in court, and whose avocation might be at once known by a few wisps of parti-coloured grass worn at the side of his head, "but I doubt if he is of sufficient height."

"Pooh, he's big enough for a sapper and miner, if he'll join," replied the magistrate testily. "Swear him, if he's willing."

"As for you," continued his worship, turning to the condemned sentry, who was standing heavily manacled in the dock, though with the same deuce-may-care and malignant expression on his countenance that had distinguished it since the time of his arrest—"as for you, you have been convicted of the most atrocious crime, next to laziness, it is possible for an ant to be guilty of, and your sentence must be in accordance. Had it not been for your cowardly attack on the foreman-milker, I might have considered that the demands of justice might be met by your being publicly beheaded and afterwards drawn and quartered; but the enormity of your offence is such that, however painful it may be to the feelings of this court, a yet heavier sentence must be passed on you. You will be taken from the dock where you now stand, and conveyed to a secure asylum, where you will not be permitted to do any manner of work—no, not so much as wash yourself or masticate your corn—and in that hideous condition you will be maintained until the tortures of utter idleness overwhelm you and death puts an end to your sufferings."

The magistrate's emotion nearly choked his utterance as he delivered himself of these last words, and he was glad to whip off his black cap and hide his face in it. As for the wretched convict, anticipating a sentence no more severe than that of immediate death, his

bravado upheld him ; but when he heard to what he was doomed, casting one agonised look up at the ceiling, he gave vent to an appalling shriek, and, falling down in a fit, was carried off in strong convulsions by the officers of the court.

Although still a slave, Peter the ant found that his condition was vastly improved by his adoption of the military profession. The barracks were at the farther end of the town where the queen's palace was ; indeed, it may be said that the royal residence stood within the barrack-ground—an arrangement necessary to her majesty's security, for in the event of an invasion, the capture of the queen is, not half, but seven-eighths of the battle ; and unless there happens to be a princess of fit age at hand, panic and confusion is the immediate result amongst the deposed sovereign's subjects, and the conquerors as slaves drive them out as sheep are driven to market amongst human kind.

Although compelled to work harder than he had been used to as a cow-keeper, Peter was delighted with the change. To be sure, it was no joke to toil from sunrise till dusk at the exercise of mining, with no other shovel or pick than his own paws, and no other means of carrying away loads of earth except such as his own back afforded. But then, there was no responsibility, and, better than all, no temptation such as that presented by the produce of those absurd winking green cows. Better still, he knew when his work was done, and then came the jovial time. Peter very speedily discovered—it is a source of pain to the writer to declare it—and was vastly pleased by the discovery, that the common soldiers of the ant army were all more or less tainted with that laxity of morals that had proved the downfall of their comrade the sentry who was set over Peter when he was in the dairy interest. It was a cause of disturbance with Peter at first lest some of the condemned ant's comrades might resent the evidence he had given at the trial, and take opportunity to revenge him ; but he need not have troubled himself on this head. The military ants were a happy-go-lucky lot, and the story getting wind amongst them, the hapless felon was ridiculed rather than pitied, while Peter was only teased and joked about choking the cow.

Although but a slave, and as such permitted to sit at the lower end of the mess-room only, Peter speedily found favour with the more reckless of the petty officers and free ants. They had heard the story of the clever manner in which he had floored the big sentinel, and several of them being excellent wrestlers, were of a mind to try a fall with him ; and since they were all powerful fellows, enjoying the advantages of a strict military training, it is very probable that had Peter been bereft entirely of his human instincts and reduced to the condition of a simple ant, at his very first bout he would have come

in for ignominious defeat and a skinful of sore bones; but, as it happened that he retained some recollection of "back-falls" and "cross-buttocking," there was not an ant of his company could compete with him, although many tried, much to the diversion of the officers even, who were as astonished as the men at Peter's extraordinary system of attack, and frequently rewarded him with a draught of a kind of small-beer, obtained by soaking old grain in water, and causing the liquor to ferment by adding to it the least drop of honey-dew.

You would have thought that after his many hairbreadth escapes, Peter would have been humbly thankful for this happy change in his condition of life, and exerted himself to deserve it. Not he. So far from returning thanks to the invisible agency that watched over and protected him, he was so insolent and daring as to attribute the mending of his fortune to his own ingenuity, and to set about concocting means whereby to increase his popularity and render his existence even more pleasant than at present, quite regardless of manners or morality. Referring to his human instinct for inspiration, he begged permission to introduce to his officers, for their after-work amusement, the sport of boxing; and having, with considerable ingenuity, constructed a set of boxing-gloves out of the downy material found inside the shell of the broad-bean, challenged any soldier to set-to with him. Previous to the strange ant's arrival, the sports of the military had been of the simplest sort—were confined, indeed, to three, viz., running-matches, climbing corn-stalks (polished to an astonishing state of slipperiness, and rendered yet more difficult to climb by being thickly besmeared with a kind of butter made from the green cow's milk) for a quarter of fresh barley-corn suspended from the top, and a third game called "put and butt," where two rivals placed their foreheads together after the manner of contending rams, struggling might and main to push each other over. But, as may be easily imagined, such pastime fell flat and insipid before that introduced by Peter, and never had the mess-room resounded with such uproarious mirth as that evening when the boxing was at its height.

And if nothing worse had come of the new game than an unwonted headache in the morning, or a bruised nose, or a damaged eye, no great mischief would have ensued; but, as a natural consequence, excitable tempers grew more excited as they observed the varying chances of the boxers, and grew eager and hot, and drank very much more of the small-beer before mentioned than was their habit. Then in course followed the pernicious practice of betting. Hitherto anything in the shape of wagering was as unknown amongst

the ants as stockbrokering or a national debt, but the evil grew as naturally in the unwholesome atmosphere that boxing engendered as mites breed in rotten cheese. It made Peter laugh—to himself, of course—to hear the silly creatures prompted to make wagers and ignorant of how to express themselves. One would say, “I am as sure that our comrade will win as that I shall presently get my supper;” and another would answer, “Nay, it is our ant that must win see how the other blows already; if your supper depended on your ant winning, you would go to bed empty, I’m thinking.” “Since we are both so positive, I tell you what,” replied the first; “let us put the two suppers together, and if my ant wins I will eat it all and you shall go without, and if yours wins I will go without, and you shall eat it all.” In nearly every case that came under Peter’s notice the novelty of the proposition proved at once sufficiently attractive; but there were exceptions. “Nay,” remarked a grey old ant in Peter’s hearing, “my stomach cannot have a voice in that bargain, and why should I condemn it to risk?” Peter hated that ant from that very moment. “A canting, sport-spoiling old curmudgeon! it is a good job that there are not many of his sort here,” said he, turning away from the prudent ant in disgust.

Never, however, was the old human proverb of “where there’s a will there’s a way” more exactly verified than in the case of the infatuated insects to whom the abandoned Peter introduced the pernicious courses above indicated. No disease is so contagious as the gambling passion, and before a week had elapsed it had so spread that scarcely a soldier in barracks but had made his venture or ventures, and was miserably depressed or deliriously joyful according to his success. The worst of it was, they had nothing to wager except their rations—that is to say, it appeared to be the worst part of it when the matter was but cursorily regarded, but, as the event proved, it was the best of it, inasmuch as it led to the prompt interference of the superior officers, and to their publishing such orders as, though they were inefficacious as regarded the utter suppression of the new-born vice, tended to check it very materially. The army would speedily have dwindled to an alarming condition otherwise, since by reason of the fortunate speculators enjoying double and even treble rations, and becoming in consequence too fat to endure severe duty, and of the unfortunate ones being nearly starved, there were not to be found a score of really capable ants in any one company. It was lucky for Peter that there was no inquiry as to the origin of the new practice; it is doubtful if even his being so general a favourite with the regiment would have saved him from severe punishment.

He was a favourite, and, to do him justice, he worked hard to maintain that position. Curiously enough, the more he gave way to his profligate inclinations the stronger his old human instincts grew within him. When, therefore, he discovered that there was a chance of the newly-introduced sports of boxing and betting going out of fashion, he bethought him of introducing a new entertainment; and one evening, after work, while drinking at the expense of a group of low-lived free soldiers, in the barrack canteen, he inquired of one of them what dances were most popular amongst them.

"Dancing!" repeated the amazed soldier-ant, "what do you mean by dancing? Is it anything like prize-fighting? Can you make wagers on it?"

"I'm not quite sure about that," replied Peter, "though I've a sort of notion that I have seen wagers lost and won on a hornpipe match. To be sure I have! Let me see—it was at Gosport Hard—no, it was at Portsmouth—no—yes—no!" and here, although Peter scratched his head and tapped his forehead with his fore-paw, his antish brain was unequal to catching the human recollection, and he was obliged to give it up. "Anyhow," said he, "if I can I will give you a taste of the sort of fun dancing is. Who can whistle?"

"All of us."

"What can you whistle?"

"What! Every ant whistles naturally, doesn't he?"

"Ay, ay, but a tune I mean. Something musical and brisk, and such as a fellow can move his legs to."

"A tune!" It was funny to see the ignorant creatures open their eyes and stare at the knowing ant, wondering what a tune could be.

"Hold hard a bit," said Peter, who, now that he had set his mind on having a dance, was not to be balked, "I never tried it before, but perhaps I may be able to make my own music."

And then, just wetting his tiny lips with the liquor before him, he screwed them up, and made an attempt to whistle "Jack Robinson." The whistle of the ant is peculiarly soft and plaintive—indeed, it is seldom resorted to amongst these industrious creatures except at the pairing season and on the death of a relative, and for these reasons it cannot be happily adapted to tunes of the hornpipe school. There is little doubt that an ant endowed with no more than ordinary ingenuity would have made a sad mess of the attempt. But Peter was persevering, and the novel and astonishing sounds he emitted

speedily caused every ant within earshot to approach, so that at last he was surrounded by fifty or more, all open-eyed in amazement, and with their limbs twitching in a manner that was very singular to behold, considering that never before could they possibly have heard a dance tune.

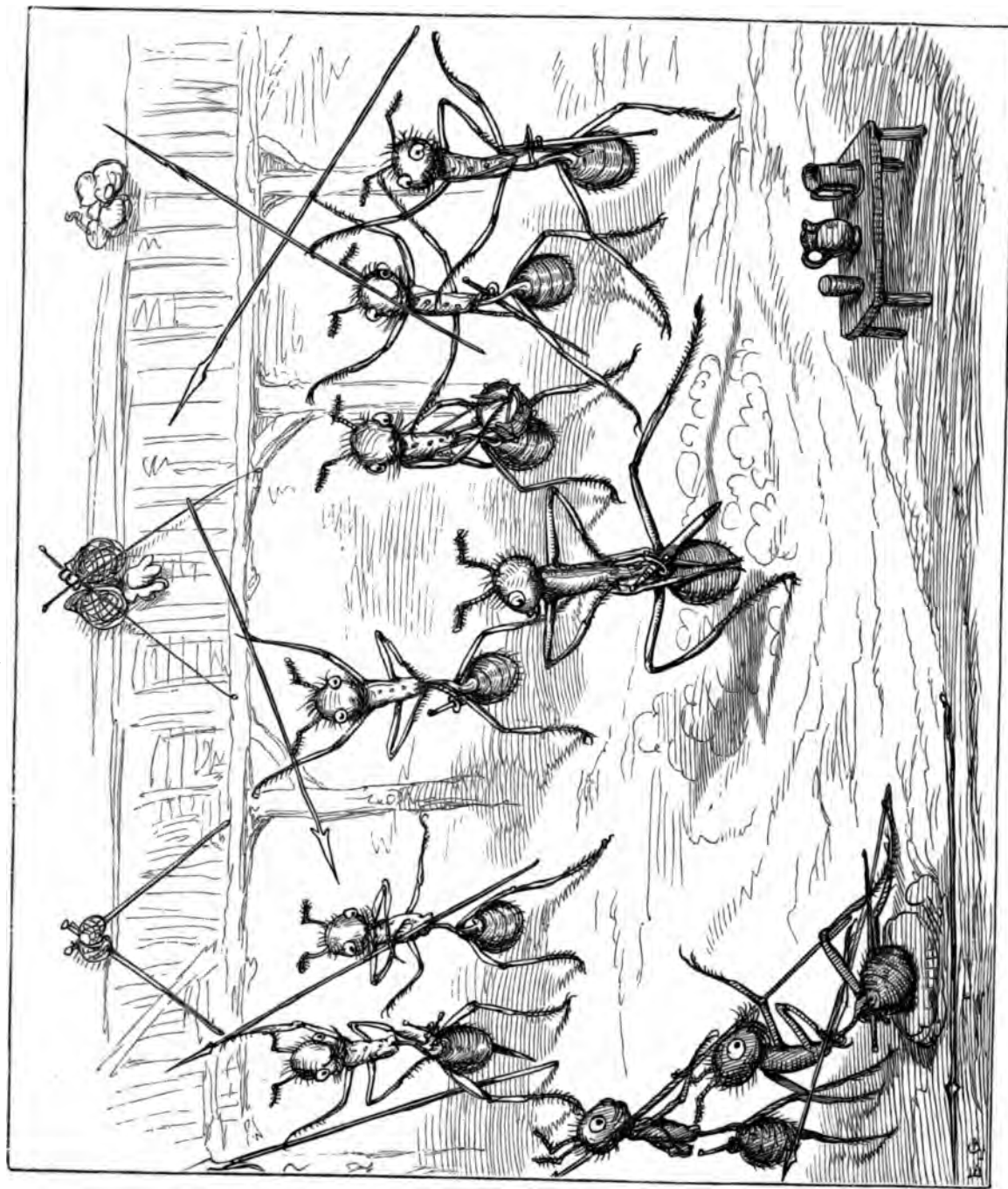
When Peter, to the best of his ability, had concluded the tune, the applause from his audience was deafening, and those that had gathered about him since he began begged a repetition.

"Nay, the best part has yet to come," exclaimed the soldier whom Peter had first consulted as to his project. "He is about to dance! The tune waits on the dance, and therefore the latter must be something superior."

"Silence for the dance!" everybody cried.

But Peter explained that a dance was a performance that insisted on space rather than on silence, and begged that they would stand back a bit and give him room, and this they did, wondering more and more, as you may be sure. Then Peter began. If he found the tune difficult he found the dance still more so. When he made the proposition he quite overlooked the fact that he was now in possession of six legs, or rather four legs and a pair of arms. Of course it was necessary for him to stand up on his hind-legs, and what was he to do with the other pair? It was excessively awkward, because, although he tried hard to keep them straight down to his sides, they *would* fly up the moment that, in his enthusiasm, he forgot about them, with anything but a graceful effect; and what with this source of distress, and the fatigue of whistling all the time that he danced, he speedily became exhausted, and was glad to sit down.

But never before in their lives had they witnessed the performance of a hornpipe, and therefore could not possibly be critical in the matter. To them it was the perfection of fun, and with much boisterous praise and offers of drink they entreated him to go through it again. Next time, however, Peter bethought him of the expedient of having his pair of middle legs tied to his sides, and now indeed his hornpipe was a spectacle to witness. The rounds of applause that attended each new leap and shuffle was like a discharge of musketry, and brought the ants in barrack out in shoals to see what the row was about, so that the canteen was speedily crowded, and rendered so insufferably hot that an adjournment to the open court was proposed. After the hornpipe Peter warmed to his work, and essayed a "sword dance." Swords were not used in the ant army, only spears; but crossing two of these last-mentioned weapons along the ground, the dancer acquitted



PETER THE ANT INITIATES HIS MILITARY COMRADES INTO THE MYSTERIES OF HORNSPIPE DANCING.

himself so satisfactorily that his fortune would have been made had his audience possessed anything so substantial as money to bestow on him.

That night Peter retired to his couch as vainglorious an ant as ever slept. "Isn't it prime?" he exclaimed to himself, grinning in the dark. "I am all right now, and I wish never to be anything but what I am. I'm the cleverest ant in the colony—there can be no mistake about *that*—and I know a hundred other tricks that will take with them even better than hornpipe dancing. There are jolly times in store for me. Ha! ha! how it would vex those impertinent little invisibles, with their plottings and whisperings, could they see how I am enjoying myself in this stage of my 'punishment!'"

And with a scornful and contemptuous smile curling his lip, the ungrateful and insolent insect closed his eyes in slumber.

But, as it happened, there was graver business before the army of the ant queen than whistling and dancing. As the magistrate had informed Peter when he enlisted in the military service, these were war times, and within a very short time there might occur opportunity for an ant of mettle to distinguish himself, and win not only his emancipation, but high dignity in the army. Nobody, however, except the commander-in-chief and his officers in council knew how soon the said war-times might commence. Those high personages knew well enough, however, and even while the light-hearted and reckless soldiery were laughing and quaffing and giving their minds to enjoyment, the military sages were closeted with her majesty, arranging for a tremendous invasion that was to take place to-morrow morning, as it were. It was a maxim with the martial authorities of this colony that a soldier should always be kept in ignorance as long as possible as to when his fighting services are required, holding it to be a settled principle that nothing is more antagonistic to furious onslaught and bloody raid than timely reflection and deliberation. "Fire their enthusiasm suddenly, and with a single blast, and while they are red-hot keep them stirring lest they cool," was the advice of the Ajax of his tribe, and the advice was unanimously adopted.

In accordance with this resolution, an hour before the ordinary time of rising there was suddenly heard throughout the ant camp a cry of "To arms! to arms!" and, well trained and disciplined as they were, in less than twenty minutes every soldier was alert and fully equipped on the parade-ground. There the whole body assembled, and the commander-in-chief, in a brief yet forcible speech, announced to them that it was the intention of the government that day to make war against the Whity-browns, whose territory

was distant not more than half-an-hour's journey at quick march. "They are more numerous than us," cried the veteran, who had lost a leg in some previous engagement, and sustained such damage to his proboscis that he harangued his troops with a snuffling accent—"they are more numerous than us, and they are larger than we are, but, like the fat corn-ear that hangs from the weak stem, their size shall be their downfall. Size! What ant present is not a match for an unwieldy, pot-bellied Whity-brown? What ant present—ay, even the youth that as yet has not tasted of war, and is, therefore, ignorant of its delicious flavour—would give the wall to a Whity-brown, or turn out of a path at its bidding? Nevertheless, my comrades, innocent and harmless as our enemies seem, they in reality are not so, except when regarded from a belligerent point of view. Their idleness is pernicious as an example to ants as a community, as their enormous bulk sufficiently proves. Their land is rich, and green cows with them are as plentiful as corn-husks with us, hence they have grown so sleek and fat as to be an offence in the sight of ants lean and industrious. They are fat, and no further evidence is needed that they are lazy. Let us provide them with one day's hard work, my comrades, confident for our own parts that a good action is never left unrewarded."

Uproarious applause followed this spirited speech, especially the latter part of it in which the promise of booty was so ingeniously conveyed. This and the general's allusion to the numerous green cows possessed by the Whity-browns thrilled rank and file with delight, for although not expressed, it was perfectly understood that for that day and the next, indeed, until such time as her majesty's chancellor of the exchequer came round and counted and branded the cows captured by the victorious army with the broad arrow, the quantity of honey-dew yielded by the captives might be appropriated with impunity.

There was one ant, however, attached to the army who was by no means overjoyed at the prospect of warfare, and that one was Peter. He was not at heart a coward, but he could not help reflecting that of late his behaviour had been anything but proper, and that it was not at all improbable that the invisible powers that ruled his destiny might be angry with him, and select this as a fitting opportunity for his humiliation and punishment. "Confound the Whity-browns," thought he bitterly, "and those that picked a quarrel with them. What have I to do with it? If they had left me alone I might have remained down here hidden and altogether forgotten and happy; now, as likely as not, soon as I put my head out of our city gates I shall be recognised by those precious whisperers, and once more be tackled by them."

To be sure this line of argument showed the narrowness of Peter's views, and the small esteem in which he held the precious whisperers, as he designated them. He had yet to learn better. He was a wrong-headed and obstinate scholar, but his tutors, although inclined to mercy, were inflexible as rock, and in their hands he was doomed to bend or break.

For some little time Peter entertained the hope that he might be left behind, and very likely in order to favour the possibility, he contrived to lose his way in an obscure avenue of the town just as the muster-roll was being called over; however, the picket sent out to gather in skulkers happily discovered him, and he made his appearance at his post in good time.

Being only a slave labourer he was not armed with any kind of weapon. The tactics of the general in command was to send a body of sappers stealthily in advance under the command of an experienced officer, and their duty was to approach the outworks of the Whity-browns, and diligently set to work to undermine their walls while they were still asleep. As a sapper and miner Peter belonged to this detachment, and not without many misgivings he took his place and sallied out at the gate into the open field. It wanted yet an hour of daybreak, and was profoundly dark. "They must have sharp eyes to see me at present at all events," thought the poor weak-minded little ant, and, so comforted, he stepped along in better spirits.

As before stated, it was a stiffish half-hour's march to the territory of the Whity-browns, and the sappers started just that time in advance of the main body of the army, in order that they might complete their work before the moment arrived for open and decisive operations. It was ticklish work the sappers and miners were engaged on. No doubt the Whity-browns had sentinels posted about their outworks, and if it should happen that the coming of the Shiny-browns was suspected they might fall into a trap from which there was no hope of extrication. Aware of this, the officer in charge, arrived within two minutes' walk of the Whity-brown camp, sent out skirmishers, who in a very little while returned with the gratifying intelligence that the coast was quite clear, and that the too-confiding Whity-browns had not even a sentry on duty at their gate, which was simply closed and barred.

Then the sappers went forward, and, arrived at the walls of the hill in which the Whity-brown colony was, set to work with a will. They were experienced ants every one of them, and even Peter, although little more than three weeks in the service, was tolerably

well versed in the business expected of him. Finding that he remained unmolested, and as free to work as the rest, his terrors forsook him, and cheered by the prospect of plunder, he delved and picked and carried like a Trojan. In the short space of five-and-twenty minutes the outer walls were drilled through in fifty places, or so nearly through that the slight and treacherous partition allowed to remain might be pushed down by the simple application of half-a-dozen shoulders. Their work completed, the commanding officer drew them off to a distance, and there instructed them in their future duties, which were precise and very simple. They were to take no part in the battle, but when the panic and confusion was at its height they were to swarm into the besieged town with loud cries, and seizing all the cows they could to drive them out captives to a small plot of ground just handy, and where a reliable guard of regular soldiers would be found in readiness to receive them.

In accordance with these arrangements, soon as the main body of the army came up stealthily as the sappers and miners had done, at a preconcerted signal the doughty Shiny-browns, each uttering a cry of defiance, rushed forward and commenced the attack. Some assailed such weak points as the sappers had prepared, while others stormed the gates. It was at this last-mentioned point that the panic and terror occasioned by the unexpected invasion was chiefly and most painfully visible. Suddenly awakened from peaceful repose, there might be seen issuing from the streets and byways of the distressed colony old and decrepit ants, tottering here and there, and, friends in misfortune as they had ever been in prosperity, wringing paws with each other, and embracing lamentably, and mother ants with their troops of little ones crying out in affright as they ran after their distracted parent, and cuddled under her as alarmed chicks under the hen. Even the stalwart males, the fighting ants—burly, overfed fellows—each at least twice the size of a Shiny-brown, instead of acting with the coolness and method that the occasion required, were in a state of helpless perplexity and confusion, and ran blundering against each other, only yet sufficiently awake to feel ill-tempered at being disturbed so unceremoniously from sleep, and to ask of each other "What's the matter?"

It was the aggressive Shiny-browns that furnished an answer to the simple question. In something less than a minute and three-quarters from the moment of attack the great gates yielded to the battering that was brought against them, while the outer walls in twenty places showed gaps through which half-a-dozen able-bodied ants might have marched abreast, and the dire work of slaughter commenced. The Whity-browns, though



APPALLING ROUT AND SLAUGHTER OF THE WHITE-BROWNS.

an indolent race, and inclined to eat up in the evening the hay that they made during the day's sunshine, were as brave as brave could be when once their blood was roused. And was not this outrage enough to rouse it? For weeks past the Shiny-browns had professed the warmest friendship for their neighbours, and had borrowed grain of them. Only three days before a deputation from the queen of the Shiny-browns had waited on the common council of the Whity-browns offering to exchange slaves for cows, and the negotiation was perfected, five slaves being counted as the value of a cow, and two slaves as that of a green calf. Now it was plain what was the real aim and purpose of the transaction; it was only that the camp might be spied, and its strength estimated and reported. This accounted for the escape of seven of the supposed slaves, who doubtless were after all free ants, well paid for the risk attending their perilous venture.

Here was the appalling result of their blind confidence! Falling on the nestlings, on the babies in their cradles, as one may say, the ferocious Shiny-browns dragged the helpless ones forth, and in sight of their agonised parents speared them, or with shouts of demoniac laughter seized them by their tender limbs, and rent them asunder. Nor was this the worst of their barbarities. It was an ancient rumour that the Shiny-browns were addicted to the horrid practice of cannibalism. To be sure it was not generally credited, which was scarcely to be wondered at, since at present the shocking fact had been discovered only by humans calling themselves naturalists, and who wrote it down in books. Reading, however, being an art not as yet introduced into the ant kingdom, they were reduced to personal observation for evidence of the monstrous atrocity, and somehow or another the assertion remained uncontradicted by the persons who should know most about the business. But now, whether the custom of cannibalism had all along existed amongst the Shiny-browns, but had hitherto out of shame or cunning been successfully concealed, or whether some latent remnant of ancient and barbarous nature still lingering within them was aroused by the spectacle of such a display of fat and tender baby ants, can never be known; the chronicler's simple duty is to record facts, however repulsive to his sensitiveness the task may be, and it only remains to be said that as fast as the baby ants were slain *they somehow disappeared*.

Fast and furious raged the conflict, the wiry Shiny-browns making terrible onslaught amongst the unwieldy and panic-stricken Whity-browns, when the signal was given for the corps of sappers and miners to swarm in, and secure the prime object of the bloody battle—the green cows. Roused out of his lingering fear of the invisible whisperers, and his

worst passions excited by the cries of the victors and the victims, and the sound of clashing of arms, Peter was the first to recognise the signal, and headed his company when at quick march it dashed in at the ruined gateway. Never in all his life, or rather lives, had he beheld such a sight. Every avenue swarmed with combatants, who stirred the dust with their striving feet until it arose in clouds that charitably veiled the sanguinary slain and the gashed and maimed, who still strove, and whose despairing and rageful cries were echoed back from the vaulted roof. Peter's heart, alas! was not in the least touched by the lamentable spectacle, or rather it was not touched on its tender side. He was moved, not with compassion, but with a wicked desire to participate in the engagement. He revolted from the mean drudgery of driving cows, and running off from his companions, he plucked a spear from the grasp of a soldier who was lying defunct and headless in the path, and rushed to the fray.

As before stated, the balance of the battle was in favour of the Shiny-browns, and as their defeated enemies fled hither and thither before them, it was the easiest matter in the world, and, better still, one that was quite free from danger, for Peter to assuage his suddenly-revived passion for inflicting pain on others to the full. Concealed in an alcove, he darted out over and over again to inflict a cruel prod on a fleeing Whity-brown; and once observing a soldier of that army limping along on four legs, the other two being lopped from his body, Peter went behind him, and by a couple of dexterous strokes hamstrung the veteran in two other of his legs, and so rendering him quite helpless jumped on his body, and tearing the unfortunate fellow's moustache out by the roots, crammed it down his throat, and so suffocated him, although the poor fellow went down on his two remaining knees and begged hard, for the sake of his wife and family, that his life might be spared.

Spurning the body of the dead soldier, his passion for cruelty roused to boiling-point by this last exploit, Peter hurried along shouting and flourishing his spear, and presently in a dark corner he spied two soldiers, whom he immediately recognised as belonging to the company to which he was attached, busily employed over something that caused them much enjoyment, judging from their frequent bursts of merriment. On nearer approach he discovered that they were eating, and not having tasted anything since supper-time of the previous evening, he stepped up to them and civilly asked if they had a mouthful to spare.

"Fish for yourself," said one of them; "if you are too lazy or too squeamish go without, and be hanged to you!"

"Nay, don't be hard on him. Don't you know him? It's Hornpipe." (That was the name he was known by since he had achieved his saltatory success.) "Here, little 'un, here's a bone to pick."

And as the soldier spoke, he flung towards Peter the loin-bone of some small creature, which the latter at once seized with a "thanky," and began to devour with great avidity. There was some considerable picking on the bone, and the meat was peculiarly juicy and sweet eating.

"This is prime!" he exclaimed, smacking his lips. "Where do you fish for this kind of meat, my comrades?"

The two ruffian ants winked and nudged each other.

"You catch it flying—at least, that is how we caught this one," the elder of the two remarked with a brutal laugh.

"To be sure I've heard of flying-fish," returned Peter innocently; "what's the proper bait for them?"

"This is," replied the barbarian, grinning as he exhibited his barbed spear horridly stained at its point. "You stick a little pluck on here, and then you pursue your game, and if it won't bite you can. D'ye understand, Hornpipe?"

Peter did not exactly, but presently the elderly soldier, darting out of the dark corner, exclaimed, "There goes one!" and looking the way he was running, followed by his comrade, he saw them both in hot pursuit of a small young Whity-brown, who, shrieking "Mamma! mamma!" was running as fast as its slender legs would carry it—faster, for at every third or fourth step it stumbled, so that the two military scoundrels had very little difficulty in overtaking it, catching it up, and bearing it away to a corner similar to that one where Peter at first discovered them.

With the flavour of the delicate picking he had so recently partaken of still hanging about his moustache, one would have thought that the enlightenment conveyed in this spectacle would have turned Peter faint and sick, and made him bitterly regret that he had not gone hungry rather than have fed so odiously; but, alas! he was past regret, past remorse, past everything creditable. He only whistled knowingly, and laid the tip of his fore-paw to the side of his proboscis.

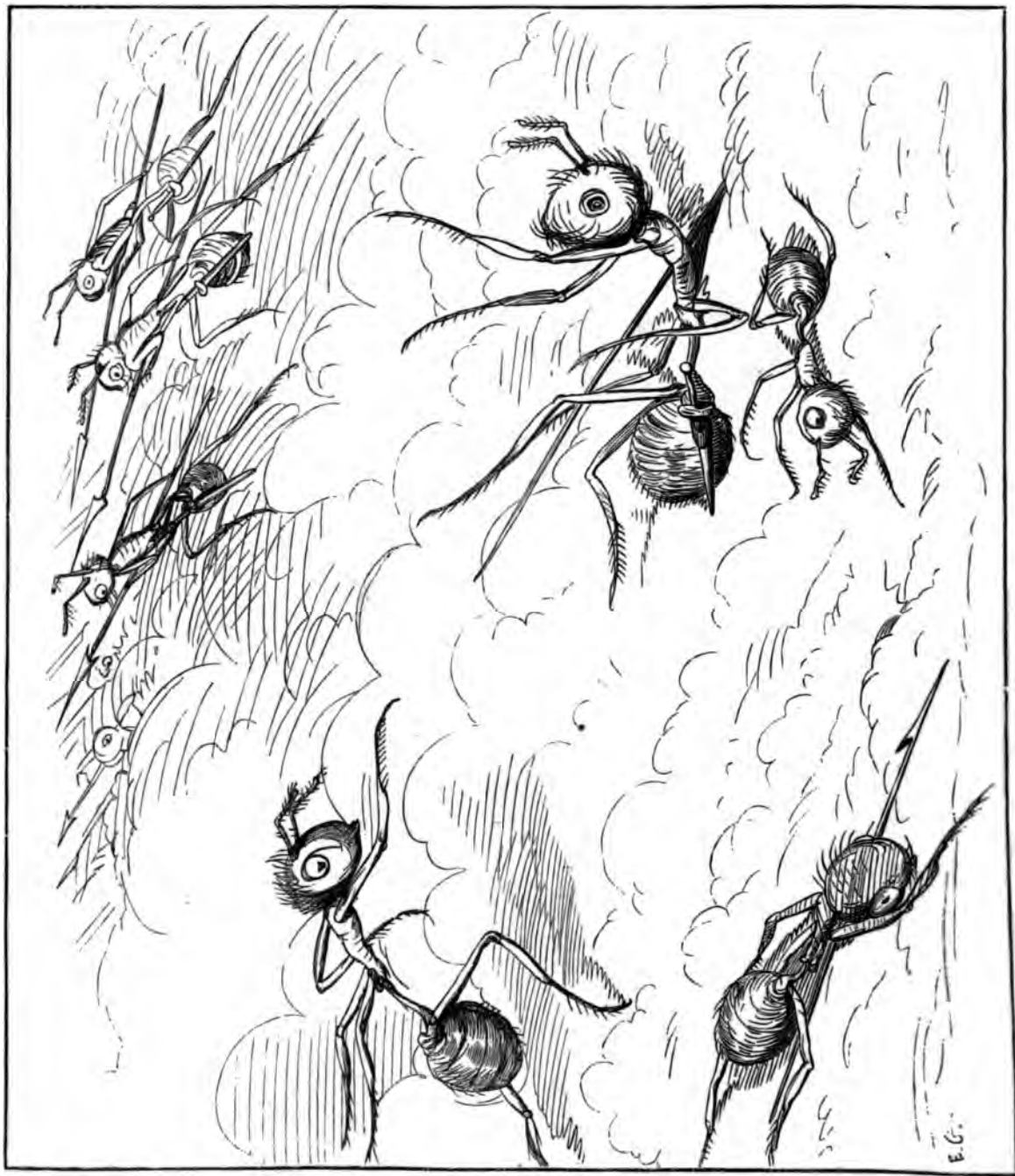
"Ho! ho! *That's* the sort of flying-fish, is it?" he exclaimed, with as cruel a laugh as ever in any of his lives he had given utterance to. "The flavour suits me to a T. Suppose I try my luck at angling for one."

But though he traversed the lanes and avenues and peeped into every place where he thought it likely that infant fugitives might lie concealed, his search was for a long time unsuccessful. At last, just as he was entering a gloomy alley, he detected a slight rustling sound at the farther end, and rushing in with a tremendous shout and brandishing his weapon by way of intimidating any one that might be there concealed, he speedily discovered a poor she-ant of the Whity-brown tribe, cuddling her last remaining little one beneath her and trembling in every limb. Soon as she was conscious of the approach of the terrible Peter, in a plaintive voice she begged him to be merciful, declaring that she had somehow lost all her babies but this last one, and that if it was forced from her she should certainly die with grief.

"And if I don't force it from you I shall certainly die of hunger, which is a matter that concerns me much more, so here goes!" was Peter's shameful reply, and with that, throwing down his spear to be the more at liberty for wrestling, he immediately sprang at the devoted mother.

But he had yet to learn that the admirable and wonderful instinct that actuates the lioness to brave every danger in behalf of her little ones burns as constantly in the bosom of even so tiny a thing as an ant. His recent exercise in dancing had rendered Peter particularly active, and thinking to take the poor she-ant at disadvantage as she crouched down over her infant, he made a spring in the air and came down with crushing weight fair atop of her back. It was the little ant nestling beneath her that suffered most, however, as the quick sharp cry it uttered sufficiently attested. The mother-ant was merely slightly stunned by the shock, and this cry of pain from her infant revived her instantly. Exerting all her strength, she flung herself on her side, and catching the second left thigh of her assailant in her powerful jaws, made her teeth meet in it.

This brought the contest to more of an equality, for with a howl of anguish Peter rolled over and regained his five legs, his fifth suffering so frightfully that he dare not set a toe of it to the ground. He was mad almost with fury, and was led to do a very dastardly thing. In the first place his antagonist was a female, and he, of all ants, coming as he did of sailor origin, should have been aware of the respect due to the sex under any and every circumstance. It would have been bad enough had he caught up his spear and attacked her with it; but in the meanness of his passion he sought to wound her more cruelly than was to be effected by a spear thrust. He darted at her unguarded infant, and grasping its



little neck, so ferociously twisted it round and round, that in less than four seconds it ceased to exist.

But swift retribution overtook him. It was the she-ant that availed herself of the abandoned spear. Seeing her little one in his relentless grasp, she caught up the weapon, and with a cry such as none but a bereaved mother can give utterance to, she took deadly aim and hurled it at him, so that next instant he lay transfixed and dead as the baby-ant beside him.



CHAPTER V.

"Is his case *quite* hopeless do you think?"

"Quite; I have done with him. There is no good in him, and he must die. He has exhausted our patience—he is incorrigible!"

"Truly he is very bad—worse even than I should have thought possible; but have you not still left a little patience for him, my sister?"

"None at all. He is treacherous—he is barbarous—he is vile beyond measure. Let him die and trouble us no more."

"His death may trouble us more than his life. Think of that, sister."

"His death will be just; his life is not."

"He is very young, sister."

"He is older than when last you pleaded for him."

"Were we quite judicious, do you think?"

"Judicious in what, sister?"

"In permitting him to assume ant shape. Ants in their manners and habits are very like human beings."

"True" (this after a pause); "still he was not tempted more than any other ant. He had best die before he grows worse."

"I was thinking, sister, if he might be made to do penance in the shape of any creature he abused during his first life, while at the same time there was kept in his view constantly the highest and best form of earthly existence, and that with which he is most familiar—that which by his great cruelty on board the ship he forfeited."

"I don't see how that may be accomplished."

"Will you agree to spare him yet this once, and let me have my way with him—just this once? If I fail I will never plead for him again, I promise you."

"On these conditions I agree, and I wish you that success, my sister, I am afraid you will never attain."

And then Peter opened his eyes. Surely he must have been dreaming the conversation above recorded, for he seemed to leave it and the talkers just as abruptly as one does when

he is startled out of a sound sleep. Just as under such conditions also Peter's were opened broadly and at once, and not by doubting and uncertain degrees. Consequently, his amazement at what he beheld was all the greater.

He was no longer in the underground dominions of the ants, but in an ordinary room such as inhabited by human beings—a neat little room, with an open window adorned with gay flowers, which assuringly waved their reality as the soft morning breeze blew in on them. It was evidently a breakfast-room, and an English one. There were the English ham and the English eggs, and—as though to put aside any lingering doubt as to the whole affair being essentially English—presently in came a rosy maid-servant, with “Kent” as plainly visible on her cheery dimpled face as though it was painted there in red letters. She came in with a coffee-pot, which she set on the bright hob, and then she gave a finishing touch or two to the breakfast-cloth, and tripped out as neatly as she had tripped in.

So overwhelmed in amazement was Peter, that he could not stir from the corner where he was. Vividly as though it had all happened within the preceding half-hour, came back to him a remembrance of all that had happened to him since that unlucky moment when he so cruelly assailed the cockroach in the rigging of the India merchantman Mangowallah. He saw the unlucky insect struggling might and main to escape the jaws of the deadly shears; he saw himself in beetle shape sadly contemplating the battered and inanimate body of Peter Walkinshaw; he saw himself a beetle amongst beetles; he caught a glimpse of his enemy the centipede, and of his other enemy the hot-headed Indian “drummer.” He saw himself a bluebottle, and his memory afforded him a rapid panoramic view of his exploits in shape of that insect; he saw himself a snail, and the ghost of the hapless slug he so deliberately murdered flitted before his ashamed vision; he saw himself an ant, and as such rehearsed his serious troubles and his antics (though never in all his various lives in so little humour for punning)—in short, he saw all that had transpired since his purgatory commenced, and that in less time than has been occupied in writing this last line.

“It is all a dream!” Peter murmured to himself—“all a terrible dream! I have never been a sailor, nor a cockroach, nor a bluebottle, nor a snail, nor an ant. I have never left home at all (though, upon my word, I have not the slightest recollection of the furniture of the breakfast-parlour), and that is our new servant (father spoke of changing, I remember), and I have just come down to breakfast. Dream or no dream, I am very hungry, and it seems a precious long time since I tasted a cup of tea or a slice of

new bread with fresh butter on it. I will take the liberty of helping myself without waiting for father and mother."

And never for a moment doubting his ability to go straight towards the breakfast-table, Peter made a move forward, and instantly his head came in such violent contact with some invisible substance as made him stagger back again in a terrible state of alarm; nor did it tend to abate his terror when, somewhat recovering from the shock, he perceived in his immediate vicinity half-a-dozen terrible-looking creatures all of the beetle tribe, but broader and fatter some of them, and others with spiderish limbs and feet finished off with talons like the claws of a lobster. Though, judging from the angered expression visible on the countenance of each, they deeply resented the fuss and commotion that Peter had recently occasioned, they did not molest him, they only abused him in a language he did not understand, and gnashed their serrated jaws at him, making him very perfectly understand what he might expect "if he did it again." Besides these beetlish creatures there were others, the shape of which Peter could not make out distinctly, because they lurked and showed but indistinctly amongst a mass of green vegetation that, now Peter looked about him, jutted out on every side.

Never had Peter experienced a disappointment so complete and agonising. He was *not* a human creature, as but a few moments since he had so gratefully imagined himself to be. It was *not* all a dream—it was all terrible reality—his recollection of having been a sailor, and a cockroach, and a bluebottle, and a snail, and an ant was all real; the whispered conversation which had brought the supposed "dream" to a determination, that was real too—the charitable whisperer of the pair *had* taken him in hand, and this was what she had made of him—a newt!

Yes, there could be no mistake about it. There was a smooth black stone immediately beneath the luckless Peter, and as in horror he turned away his gaze from the monsters by which he was surrounded he saw his shape reflected in the smooth stone's black surface as in a looking-glass. There was the shiny brown-black body, the four little stumpy webbed feet, the stupid-looking, blunt, defenceless head, the cumbrous rudder-like tail; he recognised them all, for when a boy he had been out newt-catching many a time, being the possessor of one of those torture places for little fishes and reptiles—an aquarium.

It was in an aquarium that he now was, and lurking behind a stone at the bottom he peeped out, and knew his ugly neighbours every one. There was the terrible beetle "boatman," and the "water-tiger," and the ill-used tadpole, and his old enemy the stickle-



PETER THE NEWT OBTAINS A HORRIBLE INKLING OF HIS FUTURE.

back. He did not remark the stickleback at first, because he was in-doors, having built him a house in which to reside in comfort with his family amongst the weeds that grew at the side near the top of the glass vase, but as far as Peter could make out, a mischief-making young water-tiger must needs go tattling to the mighty stickleback about who it was that had caused such a rumpus down below, whereon the latter put his head out at his gate for all the world like a bull-dog looking out of his kennel, and directed a glance at Peter that instantly reminded him of his adventure as a fishing-fly in the weedy stream over in India.

One thing was speedily made apparent to Peter the newt, and that was that in none of his previous shapes since he had forfeited man form had he been endowed with so much of human intelligence. No doubt this was part of the charitable whisperer's design, since it was no use placing the culprit in constant view of human existence unless he was endowed to some considerable extent with powers of human observation and reflection. As an ordinary newt, Peter could have taken no interest in what was going on in the room where he was, but as it was, he regarded with much emotion the entrance of a lady and a gentleman of just about the age of his own parents when he last saw them, and of a boy just such another as he himself was before he was sent to sea. It was this boy that attracted the chief of Peter's attention, however. Was *he* the owner of the aquarium? Peter's heart sank within him as the strong probability that such was the case pressed itself on him, for before he had been in the room ten minutes it was quite evident that he was not a nice boy. In the first place, he was greedy. Peter, watching him with painful anxiety, remarked that he helped himself three times to sugar while the attention of his parents was engaged in another direction, and that he took care to secure the largest egg. He was a sly boy, and had a habit of stealthily dropping bits of fat on to the pretty carpet under the table on the speculation that the cat would discover and eat them.

But even with weaknesses such as these it was not impossible that he was a boy with a kind heart for inoffensive and helpless creatures. Alas! this primest essential of all—if so be that he was the custodian of the aquarium—was not possessed by the little rascal. Newts have sharp eyes, and you may depend that Peter made the best use of his. Steadily watching the boy, he presently saw him fish a fly out of the cream-jug into which it had a moment before blundered, and lay it to dry atop of the hot tea-urn. It was evident from his covert way of performing the precious trick that he meant the fun arising

out of it for his own special and private amusement ; but the wretched fly, reeling his back in a fair way of being flayed, kicked up his legs in a way that was so exquisitely ludicrous that the cruel young monkey could not resist clapping his hands and shrieking out in delight. The consequence was that his father, discovering the source of his amusement, rewarded him with a sound box on the ear, and he retired from the table bellowing, while his parent released the poor fly and stood him on the lid of the earthenware marmalade-pot to cool. Still watching the artful one, however, Peter the newt observed him sidle up to the pot, recapture the fly, and by a dexterous move toss it into the aquarium, whereon that bull-dog of a "tittler," issuing from his kennel, snapped it up in an instant, and retired with it wagging its tail.

"What are you doing now, sir?" his father asked him, looking up suspiciously.

"Only feeding my fish, father."

Feeding *his* fish! Peter's worst fears were realised ; he and his unfortunate companions were the property of this little lad, who, despite his pretty face and curly hair, was, without doubt, as cruel a little monster as—as Peter himself used to be. Seeking a comparison, Peter was driven to this one. He could not avoid it. The whole scene before him was so irresistibly suggestive of such as were for so many years familiar to him, the boy himself was so exact a counterpart of that other little boy who speared the gold fish with a table-fork and plucked the schoolmaster's linnet alive, that the newt was compelled to the recognition, and if ever a newt blushed with shame Peter was that one.

"There is at least one consolation—he has a good-natured father," reflected the miserable little reptile as a tear of remorse—the first one he had shed for several months—trickled down his scaly nose ; "perhaps he merely calls us his, and that it is his father who has the care and tending of us. Let us hope so."

But his hopes were futile. Having finished his breakfast, the father put on his hat and went away while the maid came in and cleared away the crockery, and the mother went bustling about her household duties. The boy, too, vanished, but in half-an-hour or so he returned with an eager face and approached the crystal prison. He had some worms in his hand of the small red kind, and first beating a tattoo on the side of the glass to attract the attention of his prisoners, he proceeded to feed them.

Soon as he knocked there emerged from the sticklebacks' cave two other fish of that tribe, besides the sinister pink-eyed one Peter had already seen, and they took their post at the surface of the water so that they might monopolise all the worms as they were thrown



THE TRUANT NEWT DISCOVERED AND CAPTURED.

in. The boy had a little stick in his hand, and his sport was to drive back the stickleback to their den, and then to drop in a tempting worm so as to induce a tadpole or a bull-head to make a move towards appropriating it. This, however, was a spectacle that the pre-daceous monsters of the cave could not tolerate; they rushed out in a body, and attacking the rash tadpole bit and tore him till he gasped for mercy, and dropped the worm out of his mouth, when it was instantly torn piecemeal and gobbled down by the robbers, to the great delight of the boy, who capered about and gazed on the cruel sight with eyes as cruel as the sticklebacks' own.

All this while Peter had lain under his stone not daring to move, until presently a great fat water-beetle having offended one of the bullies before-mentioned, the unwieldy thing scudded towards Peter's hiding-place, and wishing to see a fight, the boy blocked the way with the tip of his stick. He set the stick down so hard, however, on Peter's tail as to cause him extreme pain, and he bolted out of the hole.

"Hallo!" the boy exclaimed in astonishment, "if there isn't that jolly old newt that we all thought had got away. What an artful beggar! Come here, newty, old boy; you've been playing the wag, and you've got to take your handers."

And there being nothing handier than his own fingers, he fished Peter out with them, and laying him on the flat of his back on the table, with wanton cruelty held out one of the webbed feet after another and struck them smartly with the stick, which was of hard wood—a short ebony ruler, indeed.

"Now you won't play the wag again, newty; just let us see if you could if you had the chance."

And with that the rascal placed the poor reptile right side upwards on the table, and naturally enough it put the best of its four bruised legs forward to get away.

"Oh! I see that you hav'n't had half a dose yet, newty!" exclaimed the little monster, and laying his victim on its back once more he placed its unlucky toes on the bowl of a spoon and hammered them with the stick unmercifully till Peter could have screamed with agony.

"I think that will do, newty; now put your toes in your pocket, and go and sulk under your stone again till you feel better."

Poor Peter needed no second telling to get back under his stone again; as soon as he was placed in the water he scuttled there at once, and lay trembling and aching. Who got a share of the remainder of the worms he neither knew nor cared; he had no stomach,

no heart for anything. With his face to the dark and his back to the light, and his tortured toes aching horribly, he passed the livelong day reflecting on what was and what might have been. With his increased intelligence, his cogitations were almost entirely retrospective, and bitterly did he now regret the evil courses that had brought him to his present wretched condition. "It is all my own seeking," he thought, as he wept bitterly. "I've had my chances, and I've neglected them. It was bad enough to be an ant, but in that state there was something to live for, something to work for, something to enjoy after it was earned." It would not have been so bad had he been condemned to live a newt amongst newts; but to be a poor isolated creature without a fellow to speak to, surrounded by enemies whose aggressive tactics he was ignorant of, to have for his owner and absolute master a wickedly-disposed little wretch like that boy! The poor newt's sobs quite disturbed the stone under which it lay concealed.

Come the evening the candles were brought into the room, and by this time grown somewhat more composed, Peter turned his face to the glass wall of his prison, and there was revealed for his contemplation the spectacle of the height of human enjoyment, the comfortable fireside. There sat the father reading some good book, and mamma at her needlework, and the boy, who was cunning enough to put on his best behaviour when his father was present, busily employed at painting little pictures for a miniature theatre that stood on the table. "There they are!" sighed Peter; "how happy they look, while I am a miserable thing, beneath the notice even of a stickleback, and only fit to consort with tadpoles and water-bugs! and all my own seeking too, all my own seeking! Shall I ever have another chance, I wonder? Shall I ever escape from this wretched puddle? I wish that the charitable whisperer could see me *now*! I'm sure that she would take pity on me! But how can she help me? I have no voice to call on her, and should I venture near the top, so that she may see me, those horrid sticklebacks will set on me! I wish that I was dead!"

Let us hope, however, since the miserable Peter evinced such tokens of remorse and contrition, that these last ejaculations were due rather to his despair than his deliberate desire.

By-and-by came supper-time, and the boy brought some bread, and threw it into the vase; but nobody except the water-tiger beetles and the boatmen dared rise to the surface to secure their share of it, for the voracious sticklebacks, rushing out of their den, were lurking here and there, snapping, and snarling, and showing their spiky teeth

in a manner frightful to behold. The father took a candle, and came towards the aquarium to see the fish feed.

"Your newt does not seem the better for his holiday, my boy," said he; "I wonder why he does not come up for his share?"

"Ah! I wonder!" returned the little hypocrite. He did not say a word about having battered the poor newt's toes.

"He used to fight his way bravely one time; the sticklebacks used to run away quite afraid of him."

"Perhaps he's sick. I'll have him out to-morrow morning, and give him a dose of physic," said the boy, grinning.

"Let us have no tricks, my son," returned his father, frowning severely. "You know what you caught when you spoilt my long tobacco-pipe playing your pranks with that poor frog."

"I was only joking, father. I wouldn't hurt the poor newt for the world," said the malicious little wretch.

Then they carried out the candles, and retired to bed, and in a little while perfect silence reigned in the house.

There yet remained a good share of the bread floating on the top of the water, and Peter was hungry. The words the boy's father had uttered were impressed on his memory. "The creature I am mistaken for used to fight his way, and the sticklebacks used to run away afraid of him. Ah, well, since I am compelled to be a newt I may as well do as newts do," he said to himself; "anyhow, I can but try for a share of the bread."

And with that he crept out of his hole, and began to paddle towards the surface. But the first half-dozen strokes served to convince him how much the "handlers" he had received in the morning had injured him. His webbed toes felt as though they were muffled in thick gloves, and every time he put one before the other the pain was almost past endurance. Had he been wise, however, he would have made no complaint of his ailments, for of all creatures none are more merciless towards each other in distress than such as live in the water. He had not risen five inches before a water-tiger accosted him. Peter did not understand what it said, but wishing to be civil he pointed out to the tiger the swelled condition of his limbs, as accounting for his inability to move faster. It was the same young tiger that had gone talking to the stickleback in the morning, and as soon

as he was informed that the newt was a cripple he made a grimace and whistled, and then shot up to the sticklebacks' den swift as an arrow.

Peter's first thought was that the water-tiger, compassionating his distress, had gone aloft to fetch him a bit of the bread; but he was speedily undeceived as to the ruffian's intentions. Before you could count ten the robbers of the cave made their appearance, all three, and, after consulting together for a little time, eyeing the maimed reptile the while, they sailed down to him in a body.

The terror-stricken newt's first impulse, on observing the unmistakably hostile approach of the venomous sticklebacks, was to make for the shelter of the friendly stone at the bottom of the vase, but he speedily discovered that this was anything but an excellent move. The fact was that the hole was not capacious enough to conceal his body entirely; his tail hung out its full length, as did his crippled hind-feet, and no sooner had he ensconced himself than the cowardly fish attacked him without mercy, each one making a dart at the protrusion that best suited his fancy, and proceeding to devour the agonised Peter alive.

Perhaps it was a fortunate circumstance that the attack was so sharp and unanimous, since it roused the wretched newt to an exercise of all his strength. To back out of his covert with his three enemies so fiercely harassing his rear was next to impossible; there was no escape for him but to lift the roof that covered him, and this, after prodigious efforts, he succeeded in doing; and maddened by rage and pain, he turned on his persecutors, seizing with his teeth and inflicting a severe mauling on the biggest and foremost one.

But though for a moment daunted, they were not subdued. In his fury he felt but little pain; but they having a full view of his hinder limbs, which to the newt was impossible, knew best about the injuries he had sustained. Seeing the sticklebacks so daring and successful, the smaller fry mustered courage to venture on a nibble; and scarcely had Peter wreaked his vengeance on the stickleback leader when he found himself completely environed by enemies, each one thirsting for his blood; even the little snigs were not afraid, but came poking at Peter with their sharp noses, and the lumbering water-beetles dived under him and pinched him with their lobster claws.

Matters were growing serious. It was very evident to the newt, unless he bestirred to help himself out of the mess, it was all over with him. There was only one course to pursue, since he could not fight, and that was to run away. Turning about suddenly, he

mouthed at and floundered amongst the foe with such ferocity that one and all for a moment retreated, and seizing the opportunity, he rose unmolested to the surface of the aquarium. But the water did not reach to the top by fully two inches, and the walls of the prison were slippery as ice, and afforded no holding for Peter's claws. Round and round he swam fast as his maimed extremities would permit, endeavouring to find a climbing place, but it was of no avail; and presently the sticklebacks recovered their courage and came at him again. The large one—him that the newt had turned on and bitten—came first, and boldly fixing his teeth in Peter's excoriated tail, there hung, with a view, as it appeared, to pulling him down.

Painful as this was, like the last attack, it could scarcely be called unfortunate. If ever there was a mad, despairing newt, that one now was Peter; and he attempted feats that under less urgent conditions would have appeared to him impossible. The sticklebacks' house afforded the closest standing-room towards the top of the tank, and with a frantic spring Peter succeeded in planting his fore-legs on the roof of it, thereby further exciting the fury of the ravenous fish concerned, who saw their abode in a fair way towards destruction, and flew at him—especially the two females, whose little ones were sheltered within—and attacked such parts as they could reach in a very savage manner. But once again the fates favoured Peter. As naturalists are aware, so that the damp may be kept out of the attics of their houses where the young ones sleep, the roof of the sticklebacks' domicile is thickly plastered with a kind of gelatinous compound not unlike birdlime, but waterproof. With this tenacious stuff Peter's fore-feet got thoroughly smeared, so that, when spurred by fresh tortures, he raised a foot to the slippery wall above the surface of the water, to his amazement and delight he found that it gave him such a hold as enabled him to draw up the other foot as well. So encouraged, with an immensity of trouble he drew up a crippled hind-leg and planted it on the roof of the sticklebacks' house, that by this time began to tremble so under his weight, that the affrighted baby "tittlers," with scarcely a scale covering their little bodies, came squalling out at the door, which was another lucky circumstance, since, impelled by paternal fears, the old one, who still held on by the newt's tail, let go his hold to go to the comfort of his offspring. Now was Peter's opportunity. Lightened of his lateral incumbrance, he availed himself of the bending roof to make a spring, and so gained the topmost ridge of the vase, and, to his unspeakable delight and satisfaction, tumbled down the outside of it, and landed on the table.

But, alas! beyond the fact that he had escaped immediate and painful death he had

small reasons for rejoicing. Being of an amphibious nature he did not immediately feel the loss of the element from which he had so recently emerged, but it required but little reflection to convince him that his condition was almost as bad as it could be. What was he to do? Where was he to go? Had he been a hale newt, sound and able-bodied, his prospects in a strange house, in a strange room—on a table of unknown height, and from which he dare not precipitate himself for fear of breaking his neck—this would have been bad enough. How much worse to be a poor crippled thing, with only two legs to stand on, and a tail that, all mumbled and mangled as it was, felt like a small red-hot poker attached to his body, so that he was glad to lay it against the walls of his late prison for coolness' sake! It was a bright moonlight night, so that Peter could see about him, and when he laid his tail against the transparent glass he perceived his enemies the tittle-bats rush towards it, with their lips drawn back and their teeth bare, butting and butting, and bruising their senseless noses, and goggling amazedly out of their ignorant eyes that they could not get at the tempting thing. Time was, and that not so very long ago, when Peter would have forgotten all his aches and pains at such a ludicrous spectacle, and done his best to have taken satisfaction of the sticklebacks by teasing and jeering them. But he was now a changed creature. Observing their malicious wrath he only pitied them, with tears trickling down his scaly nose. "Poor things!" he exclaimed, "you do but follow the dictates of your nature. Had I followed your example all my life, or rather all my lives, I should not now be in this wretched plight. But I am only justly served. How often have I condemned a miserable newt to the torture I have recently endured—wantonly and wilfully condemned him to it, and stood and looked on pleased to see it executed! Once, I recollect, one of my newts escaped out of the jar, and I never found him afterwards. What became of him, I wonder? I daresay whatever did he was better off than if he had again fallen into my hands. I shall be, whatever becomes of me, rather than be restored to the clutches of that wicked boy who beat the soles of my feet yesterday. Yes, I must avoid him; at any risk I must avoid that boy."

But *how* was the difficulty. He crawled to the edge of the table and peeped over, but to his tiny eyes the depth seemed too tremendous for him to venture on a leap. Besides, if even he did so, where would be the advantage? The doors were closed. Furthermore, there was a cat on the premises, and though but a hybrid kind of fish, it was difficult to account for taste in the feline species, and the animal in question might

not be disinclined to set his fishy flavour favourably against his scales when balancing the question in her mind.

Adjoining the table was a sideboard surmounted by a bookshelf, and it seemed not impossible that the latter might be reached by means of the damask window-curtains that hung close at hand. Once on this shelf it would be easy to stow away amongst the books, and with this advantage: it was scarcely probable that the terrible boy would trouble books, being much more inclined to idleness and cruel sport. If any one came to the shelf it would be the lad's mother, who seemed a kindly-disposed woman, or, better still, his father, instances of whose tender nature the unlucky newt had already been witness to; in which case Peter was not without hopes that his deplorable condition might be compassionated, and another chance for his life vouchsafed to him. "And if it is so I will make the best of it," said Peter, wagging his head seriously. "The lesson I have been taught during the last few days I shall never forget though I live to be as old as Methuselah."

Setting to work, then, and none the less briskly that by this time the moon had set, and the first grey tint of morning peeped in at the shutter holes, and he knew not for certain whether or no the boy he dreaded was an early riser, Peter clung to the curtains, and with much pain and fatigue finally surmounted every obstacle that lay between himself and the bookshelf, and backed in between two books at the end that were the biggest of any, but so arranging it that from his hiding-place he could peep down and see all that happened at the table where the aquarium stood.

He completed these little arrangements not a bit too soon. As it happened, the boy he so much dreaded *was* an early riser, and presently he entered the parlour and came straight to the fish-globe with a skewer in his hand.

"Where's old daddy newt?" Peter heard him softly whisper to himself; "he used to fight the tittlers; why can't he do so now? He shall, the beggar, or I'll know why. But he'll fight well enough when I stir him up with this."

This was the iron skewer, and the young gentleman proceeded to prod and poke the place where he had last seen the newt. Then he discovered the upturned stone, the sticklebacks' house destroyed, and the newt's absence.

"Phew!" whistled the boy, "there's been a jolly row here! Old daddy newt has been making up for his laziness and cowardice. Where is he? He thinks, I suppose, because he has crawled out that the sport is all over; he shall find different."

And with that he commenced a diligent search all over the floor and amongst the flowerpots that stood in the window, and looked even up the chimney. Whether he would have persevered in his exploration till he discovered the object is not certain, but he was interrupted. His father broke in on him suddenly.

"What have you lost, Augustus?" he inquired.

"My newt has got away again, papa;" and he slyly threw away the iron skewer he still held in his hand.

"You've been tormenting these poor fish again, I'm sure you have," exclaimed his father, detecting the artful movement. "Hallo! who disturbed the stones at the bottom?"

"The newt, papa."

"And who broke down the sticklebacks' nest?"

"The newt, papa."

"How dare you tell me such an untruth, sir?" And there and then the hasty parent administered to the cruel boy a trouncing, that, in the days of his hardheartedness, would have made Peter dance with joy to see. But as it was he merely shook his head and sighed woefully. "The old story!" said he. "How many times was I chastised for what I was innocent of, just because I told falsehoods so frequently no one would believe me!" And straightway his tears began to flow afresh.

Which was a pity for more reasons than the one that is obvious. Of all things he could spare moisture least of all. He had now been many hours out of water, and towards the afternoon he began to suffer the pangs of thirst to an alarming extent. His long throat felt parched, and his bright eyes grew hot in their sockets. From his perch he had a view of the vase, where the sticklebacks were already at work repairing the damage he had done on their premises in the early morning; he could see the splashing water and the tips of their slippery, deliciously cool looking tails as they steered about on the surface busy at work as slaters, and, wicked though he knew the wish to be, he could scarcely refrain from desiring to be amongst them, even though he had to fight for his life.

But even had his sore need overrode his worthy resolves it would have been impossible for him to have helped himself to his desire. He was as utterly a prisoner as though he were chained. As before stated, he had thrust himself between two large books, and his poor tail had swollen to that degree that it might have been in a vice for all he could move it. It was terrible. His exertions to extricate his unhappy caudal appendage naturally



THE CRUEL BOY'S STRIKING EXPERIENCE OF THE PROVERB THAT TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION.

increased the heat of his body, and consequently his thirst. To cool his parched tongue he lapped it out and laid it against the calf binding of one of the big books, and, somewhat relieved, dozed to a feverish sleep, and whether what ensued was reality or the creation of his excited brain is hard to say. While his tongue was still lapped, a beetle came running up and smelt at it, and ran over it, and spurned it with his sharp pincer-like toes, and then standing still on it, the insect looked Peter fairly in the face, and at once he recognised his old beetle self that he had left behind with such despising in the hold of the Mangowallah. How he would now have liked to change places with the blackbeetle, as with a look of scorn it skipped nimbly away and ran down the wall!

Next came an ant—a Whity-brown ant—out of a crevice between the books, and, smelling at his tongue as the beetle had done, suddenly gave a furious start and stung the tortured member cruelly, and as with a husky and reproachful groan the wretched newt regarded it, he shuddered as he recognised the mother ant whose young one he had so ruthlessly slain when a slave attached to the Shiny-brown army. Having accomplished this act of vengeance, the ant turned and walked away, as though the victim was unworthy of her further attention.

“Ah!” sighed Peter, “if I could only be an ant—a busy, harmless, industrious ant—I would never again repine. Oh, dear, good little whisperers, change me into an ant again, and you shall never have reason to be angry with me.”

Then came a fly—a bluebottle—singing in its small way merry as a lark, and buzzing hither and thither. With a thickness of utterance that must afflict any one who endeavours to speak with his tongue hanging out, Peter called to the fly, who instantly came.

“What’s the matter?” it asked.

“Were you ever thirsty, fly?”

“Never. Don’t know what it means.”

“Never was deprived of water till your inside was like an oven, and you felt yourself being gradually done through?”

“Get away, you old croaker,” laughed the bluebottle; “what does a free fly know about such horrors? Good-bye. There’s some new cream cheese in the dairy; I am off to get my supper there.”

“Come back! come back!” gasped poor Peter the newt; “oh, pray come back and answer me just one question!”

But the bluebottle flew off gaily, and would not return.

"And I was once a bluebottle," said Peter, overflowing with bitter remorse; "I was once a bluebottle, free to fly and go where I pleased, but I was discontented and insolent. Ah that I was a fly now, though but the tiniest and most humble!"

And with that he uttered so doleful a groan that the gentleman of the house, who was sitting with his wife taking tea, suddenly exclaimed—

"My dear, I feel convinced that there is a mouse on that bookshelf; I heard it squeak not a moment since."

"We will soon see to that, then," replied the lady; and so saying she rang the bell.

"Bring in the cat, Mary," said she; "there's a mouse on the bookshelf."

But the maid, although courageous as a lion against tramps and hen-roost robbers, was mortally afraid of mice, so she went and found the cruel boy, who was playing in the garden.

"A mouse! Where is it?" he exclaimed; "never mind about the cat; show me where it is, papa, I'll catch it with my hand. I want a mouse to try the pluck of Mother Dixon's puppy."

When Peter heard this, much as he dreaded his handling, he was grateful to the boy, and hoped that his request might be granted. But his mother would not hear of it.

"Fetch the cat," said she, "and papa shall shake the shelf, and the mouse, if there is one there, will be sure to drop down."

So the cat was brought, and the shelf was shaken with a violence that dislodged Peter's injured tail, and down he fell to the ground, and in an instant grimalkin darted on him and had him between her jaws.

"Why, it is not a mouse at all! it is my newt," the cruel boy cried in amazement.

"Mouse or no mouse, it will certainly share the fate of one," replied his father; "all is fish that comes to——"

Peter heard no more. He was conscious of a feeling of sharp teeth about his throat, and then all was over. So far over, that is to say, that the sensations that followed those of his being throttled were of so confused a sort that he could never describe them. As it seemed to Peter, the cat experienced no difficulty in devouring him until she came to his head, and there she bungled. Perhaps her teeth were bad. Anyhow, try her utmost, she was not successful in cracking the horny morsel, which, as she turned it this way and that, seemed to grow more tender and sensitive to the animal's gnawing; till at last, although the body properly belonging to it was consumed and entombed, the head became



PETER'S LAST PURGATORIAL REMINISCENCE.



tortured to life, and strove and struggled to escape. It seemed to grow did the head, so that the cat could no longer contain it in her mouth, and it rolled out and along the floor, and the cat pursued it into a dark corner; but somehow, as it rolled, the wonderful head seemed still to grow and increase in size, so that when the cat came up with it where it had stopped rolling, its tremendous proportions filled her with such fright that, stopping short, she put up her back with the hair all upright along the ridge of it, and baring her teeth till the back ones were visible, she gave vent to an appalling howl, and at a single bound leaped clean out of sight.

It must indeed have been a tremendously loud noise that the frightened cat made, since it woke Peter Walkingshaw, able seaman of the India-bound merchantman Mangowallah, out of the trance in which, for three long weeks, he had lain in the captain's own cabin. Opening his eyes with a start and an ejaculation of terror, the first object that met his gaze was his shipmate, Charley Bumstead, who, seated by the side of the bunk on which Peter was laid, was quietly splicing a rope, blowing a cloud of tobacco the while. Peter tried to raise his head, but if it had been bolted to the pillow by every hair on it, he could not have had less control over it. His tongue was very dry, but he managed to exclaim in a feeble voice——

“What cheer, Charley!”

Had it been a dead man suddenly come to life to address him, Charley Bumstead could not have sprung to his feet in greater amazement. Staying only to cast one scared glance behind him, he rushed out of the cabin, and instantly returned with the whole wondering ship's crew at his heels, with the captain at their head, and universal was the rejoicing when it was made known that the young fellow who had lain like a log since his melancholy accident had come to life again.

When Peter gained a little strength, the captain informed him of the particulars concerning his protracted insensibility, and how that it was only by the merest chance that the feeble beating of his heart was detected, announcing that he could not be dead; how that, on the ship's arriving in port, such a fatal sickness prevailed amongst the inhabitants that it was agreed on all hands that if he—Peter—meant to recover, he would have a better chance on board than ashore, and that consequently he was brought away again. Likewise how that a watch had been set over him night and day, life being kept in him by moistening his lips with some excellent Madeira the captain by good-luck had aboard.

And Peter listened to all this and much more, and very humbly and heartily expressed

his thanks; but not one word did he say respecting the marvellous scenes he had witnessed and the adventures he had undergone since he fell out of the ship's rigging and for a time faded out of life. It was years before he mentioned it to a living creature—not, indeed, until after leading a reformed and worthy life, and become the father of a numerous and virtuous family, when, being on terms of affectionate intimacy with the author and his friend the artist, he revealed his long-kept secret, and at the earnest persuasion of the two gentlemen above mentioned, was induced to permit the production of this book, in the earnest hope that it might be the means of checking thoughtless cruelty towards creatures that are dumb and helpless.



PETER EMERGING FROM THE LAST OF HIS PURGATORIAL DISGUISES.

NEW GIFT BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS,
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

NORTH COAST, AND OTHER POEMS. By ROBERT BUCHANAN. With Illustrations by Eminent Artists, engraved by the Brothers DALZIEL. Cloth elegant, 21s.

ORIGINAL POEMS FOR INFANT MINDS. By JANE and E. TAYLOR. Small 4to. cloth elegant (uniform with "Little Lays.") Profusely illustrated by the best Artists. 7s. 6d.

Peter the Cruel. By JAMES GREENWOOD. Illustrated by ERNEST GRISET. 4to. cloth extra, 5s.; or with the Plates coloured, 7s. 6d.

The Young Nile Voyagers. By ANNE BOWMAN. With Illustrations. 3s. 6d.

The Child's Coloured Scrap Book. With many Illustrations printed in Colours. Large folio, 5s.

Among the Squirrels. By Mrs. DENISON. Illustrated by ERNEST GRISET. Cloth elegant, 5s.

The Story of Papa's Wise Dogs. By JOHN BAILEY. With Illustrations by ELWES, from designs by the Author. Small 4to. cloth elegant, 3s. 6d.

Schnick Schnack: Trifles for the Little Ones. With 32 Illustrations in Colours. Small 4to. cloth elegant, 5s.

Barford Bridge; or, Schoolboy Trials. By the Rev. H. C. ADAMS. Illustrated by A. B. HOUGHTON. Cloth gilt, 5s.

The Boys of Beechwood. By Mrs. EILOART, Author of "Ernie Elton, the Lazy Boy." With Illustrations, 3s. 6d.

Lost among the Wild Men. By WILLIAM DALTON. With Illustrations. Post 8vo. cloth, 3s. 6d.

Jack of all Trades. By THOMAS MILLER. With Illustrations. Cloth gilt, 2s.

The History of Wonderful Inventions. By JOHN TIMBS. With numerous Illustrations. Cloth extra, 5s.

Archie Blake: a Sea-side Story. By Mrs. EILOART, Author of "Johnny Jordan," &c. With Illustrations. Cloth, 2s.

Inez and Emmeline; or, the Adopted Sister. By Miss DE JONGH. With Illustrations. Cloth, 2s.

Robinson Crusoe, in Words of One Syllable. By MARY GODOLPHIN. With 12 Coloured Illustrations. Small 4to. cloth elegant, 3s. 6d.

The Child's Country Story Book. By THOMAS MILLER. With 8 Coloured Illustrations. Small 4to. cloth elegant, 3s. 6d.

The Child's Country Book. In Words of Two Syllables. By THOMAS MILLER. With 16 Illustrations printed in Colours. Small 4to. fancy cloth, gilt edges, 3s. 6d.

The Child's First Book of Natural History. By Miss BOND. With 100 Illustrations. 18mo. cloth, 1s. 6d.

The Children's Poetry Book: Selections of Narrative Poetry from British Authors. With 70 Illustrations by the Brothers DALZIEL. Square, cloth extra, 3s. 6d.

The Little Oxleys: their Sayings and Doings. By Mrs. W. D. BURTON. Cloth gilt, 1s.

Fabulous Histories. Uniform with "Accidents of Childhood." With numerous Woodcuts. Cloth gilt, 1s. 6d.

The Boy's Own Country Book. By THOMAS MILLER. Profusely illustrated by BIRKET FOSTER. Toned paper, cloth elegant, 5s.

Percy's Tales of the Kings and Queens of England. An entirely new Edition. With Eight Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT. Cloth extra, 3s. 6d.

The Old Forest Ranger; or, Wild Sports in the Jungles of India. By Major WALTER CAMPBELL. With beautiful Engravings on Steel. Crown 8vo. cloth gilt, 5s.

A Wonder Book. By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE. With Illustrations. Cloth gilt, 2s.

Tanglewood Tales: a Second Wonder Book. By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE. Illustrated. Cloth gilt, 2s.

Every Boy's Book. An entirely New Edition, rewritten to the present time. With Coloured Illustrations and numerous Woodcuts. Cloth extra, 7s. 6d.

The Book of One Syllable. With Coloured Illustrations. 1s.

A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys. (Old World Fairy Tales re-told.) By NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE. A New Edition, with Illustrations. Cloth extra, 3s. 6d.

Play Hours and Half-Holidays. By the Rev. J. C. ATKINSON. With Illustrations. Cloth gilt, 3s. 6d.

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS' NEW GIFT BOOKS.

Digby Heathcote; or, the Early Days of a Country Gentleman's Son and Heir. By W. H. KINGSTON. With Illustrations. Cloth gilt, 3s. 6d.

Walks, Talks, &c., of Two Schoolboys. By the Rev. J. C. ATKINSON. Cloth gilt, 3s. 6d.

Bruin; or, the Grand Bear Hunt. By Captain MAYNE REID. Illustrated by J. B. ZWECKER. Cloth gilt, 3s. 6d.

Grimm's Household Stories. Complete Edition, with 240 Illustrations by WEHNERT. Post 8vo. cloth, gilt edges, 7s. 6d.

Grisel's Grotesques. Jokes drawn on Wood, with Rhymes by TOM HOOD. Containing 100 Quaint Designs by ERNEST GRISSET, engraved by the Brothers DALZIEL. 4to. 7s. 6d.; with the Plates coloured, 12s. 6d.

Little Lays for Little Folk. Selected by J. G. WATTS, with Illustrations by the best Artists, engraved by J. D. COOPER. 4to. cloth, gilt edges, 7s. 6d.

Homes and Haunts of the British Poets. By WILLIAM HOWITT. Profusely illustrated. Crown 8vo. cloth gilt, 7s. 6d.

Little Helps for the Little Ones. With Coloured Plates. Limp cloth, 1s.

The Orphan of Waterloo. With Illustrations by JOHN ABSALON. Fcap. 8vo. cloth gilt, 2s.

Uncle Tom's Cabin for Children. By Mrs. CROWE. With Illustrations. Fcap. 8vo. cloth, 1s.

Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare. With Coloured Illustrations. Fcap. 8vo. cloth, 3s. 6d.

PICTURE-BOOKS FOR CHILDREN.

The Child's Coloured Scripture Book. With 100 Illustrations. Square imperial, cloth, 5s.

The Child's Coloured Gift-Book. With 100 Illustrations. Square imperial, cloth, 5s.

Routledge's Picture Gift-Book. Containing 24 pages of Illustrations, printed in Colours. 4to. cloth gilt, 5s.

Routledge's Nursery Book. Containing 24 pages of Illustrations, printed in Colours. 4to. cloth gilt, 5s.

The Nursery Picture Book. With 630 Illustrations. In an Emblematical Cover printed in Colours, 3s. 6d.; or with the Plates coloured, 8s. 6d.

The Child's Picture Scrap Book. Containing 400 Illustrations. With a Cover printed in Colours. Folio, boards, 5s.; or with the Plates coloured, 10s. 6d.

The Good Child's Coloured Picture-Book. With 24 pages of Coloured Plates. Cloth, 5s.

The Boys and Girls' Illustrated Gift-Book. With 200 large Engravings by WOLF, WEIR, WATSON, PHIZ, &c. Square imperial, cloth, 5s.; or with the Plates coloured, 9s.

The Child's Picture Story-Book. With 400 Illustrations from Designs by JOHN GILBERT, WATSON, W. M'CONNELL, H. WEIR, &c. &c., engraved by the Brothers DALZIEL. Square 16mo. 5s.; or with the Plates coloured, 9s.

Popular Nursery Tales and Rhymes. With 170 Illustrations by H. WEIR, WATSON, ZWECKER, WOLF, &c., engraved by the Brothers DALZIEL. Square 16mo. 5s.; or with the Plates coloured, 9s.

The Picture History of England. With 80 full-page Illustrations by the Brothers DALZIEL. 4to. cloth gilt, 5s.

The Picture-Book of Reptiles, Fish, and Insects. By the Rev. J. G. WOOD. With 250 Illustrations. 4to. cloth, 5s.

The Picture-Book of Birds. By the Rev. J. G. WOOD, M.A. With 242 Illustrations from Designs by WOLF, WEIR, and COLEMAN. 4to. cloth, 5s.

The Picture-Book of Animals. By the Rev. J. G. WOOD, M.A. With 240 Illustrations from Designs by WOLF, ZWECKER, H. WEIR, COLEMAN, &c. 4to. cloth, 5s.

POETRY BOOKS.

Easy Poetry for Children. With a Coloured Frontispiece and Vignette. 16mo. 1s.

Little Poems. 16mo. with many Plates. 1s.

Watts' Divine and Moral Songs. 50 Illustrations. Fcap. 1s.; limp cover, 6d.; printed on linen, 2s.

The Standard Poetry Book for Schools. A New Selection, based on Mylius and others. Fcap. 8vo. cloth, 2s.

Easy Poems for Young Children. 6d.

1001 Gems of British Poetry. Selected by Dr. MACKAY. Post 8vo. cloth, 3s. 6d.





